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Creating Border Crossing Spaces for Decolonizing Critical Literacy Encounters in Teacher Preparation

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Creating Border Crossing Spaces for Decolonizing Critical Literacy Encounters in Teacher Preparation

by

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Dedication

Papi, everything I am is because of you. To my mother, Carmen, you were my first teacher.

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Abstract

Creating Border Crossing Spaces for Decolonizing Critical Literacy Encounters in Teacher Preparation

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Ultimately, this research study aimed to provide pathways for children of Color to engage in transformative literacy experiences that go well beyond developing basic, mechanical reading skills, to have access to learn in literacy classrooms that center opportunities for understanding and critiquing of their sociopolitical realities and colonial histories. In order to do that we need to understand the ways in which we can best prepare teachers to respond, include and engage with contemporary socio political, economic, and environmental realities in their literacy classrooms during increasingly difficult times in communities of Color. Guided by a critical case study methodology, this project sought out to answer two research questions: What discourses emerge from the deliberate cross-context collaboration of preservice teachers while learning about

critical literacies and anti-colonial frameworks? And, how does a transnational collaboration, across teacher preparation programs in Texas and Puerto Rico, support preservice teachers' understandings and applications of anti-colonial theories and methods? By bringing together critical literacy and de/anti-colonial theoretical frameworks, I learned that the most common discourses within the synchronous class discussions were the awakenings the preservice teachers experienced, how they participated in restrictions and ruptures through the possibilities of engaging in this work in elementary classrooms, and lastly how they held onto the double narrative argument. Regarding the collaboration in itself, my findings revealed the role of the collaboration, the teacher educators, and preservice teacher in the learning that occurred across contexts. Recommendations include a centering of voices of Color in the field of literacy teacher preparation, an openness to the ways in which preservice teachers will define colonialism in their own terms, and space to center emotion as a central to learning how to become critical de/anti-colonial literacy educators.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"...Aprendimos a caminar hace rato
Con un pie descalzo y el otro con zapato
Con la medalla del cacique en la casa de empeño
Somos los dueños de un país sin dueño..."

Hijos del cañaveral, Residente, 2017

Residente's *Hijos del cañaveral* is an anthem about national unity, resiliency, and survival, and renounces the uninterrupted colonization of Puerto Rico from 1493 to today's occupation by the United States. This artist's ideas are often deemed by many on the island as leftists, separationist and extremist, to the point where he was banned from popular FM radio stations for several years. It is no surprise that some preservice teachers on the island might see very little relationship between literacy teaching and history, social critique and decoloniality (Interview Dr. Costa, 12/12/19). For me growing up and teaching in Puerto Rico, school was about one thing, and our civic lives about something else. To intertwine these would be seen as engaging in the never ending debate between those who claim statehood, independence, or remaining an unincorporated territory of the United States. This apolitical view of the literacy classroom results in literacy lessons far removed from the sociohistorical and contemporary realities of children in Puerto Rico's schools.

These ideas, reflections, and intertwined connections between my own story growing up and doing schooling and literacy on the island and my interest in Puerto Rico's literacy teacher preparation would have never been born without my experiences as a literacy teacher educator in Austin, Texas. Here, I was made a "Latina", connected to the issues of the broader community, and made a teacher educator of mostly Mexican-American and Central American preservice

teachers. My doctoral coursework, research experiences under the guidance of literacy faculty, and experiences of my own as a literacy teacher educator in bilingual contexts, have led me to an unrelenting interest in the preparation of Latinx teachers for decolonizing critical literacy practices. Through this dissertation project I honor my whole self, the teacher scholar standing in the nepantla space (Anzaldua, 1987) between Boricua and Latina, between Puerto Rican and Texan teacher educator, and between scholar and colonized subject working from the ruptures (Zavala, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The Current State of Affairs. Although I agree with those who craftily argue that Puerto Rico's socioeconomic and political debacles have been in the making for centuries due to the colonial structures ruling our political and economic systems (Bonilla & Lebrón, 2019), a sense of urgency has come to life for all of us over the last two to three years. Undoubtedly, Hurricanes Irma and María were visible humanitarian crises that brought attention to the poor local and federal responses that led to the death of 2,975 Puerto Ricans in 2017. However, the financial crises resulting in an unpayable debt of 72 billion dollars, the highest unemployment rates in the US, and the forced establishment of the Fiscal Control Board (under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act passed by Congress) were all brewing right before these natural disasters adding to the crisis. More recently, a series of earthquakes (Rice, 2020) struck the south of the island leaving over 2,000 people in temporary shelters and many more sleeping in tents out of fear. These events were a reminder of the 2017 collective trauma that left families in the dark once more and thousands of Puerto Ricans waiting on delayed aid from the federal government (Lin, 2020). These natural and human disasters have been met with agency and activism from Puerto Rican communities and allies from grassroot movements, community

kitchens, artistic movements, advancements in renewable energy sources for the island (Bonilla & Lebrón, 2019), and a series of massive protests in *el verano del 2019* leading to the resignation of former governor Ricardo Rosello (Mazzei & Robles, 2019).

Back in the US and in the local context of our Mexican American communities in Texas, the last few years have not been any more harmonious. The 2016 election of Donald Trump and implemented migration policies have left this community living in fear and pain. The local 2017-2019 ICE Raids (Statesman, 2017, 2018) traumatized this community, separated families, and left children in limbo as supermarkets, schools and places of employment were viciously targeted by ICE officials. At the border, the discourse around the building of a 13 mile long wall along the Rio Grande Valley (Rodgers & Bailey, 2019) serves as a continued reminder of the US government attack on the Mexican American community in Texas. These attacks have been materialized in the death of over twenty migrants under ICE custody in detention centers, including five children, due to inhumane treatment, medical oversight and neglect (Rappleye & Riordan Seville, 2019). As in Puerto Rico, these events have been met with groups organizing in protest and resistance by the local communities (Aguilar, 2017) and in alliances with other immigrant communities such as through the *No Ban, No Wall* 2017 rally.

These socio-political and economic events cannot be ignored in K-12 classrooms as they are an integral part of our children's daily and collective lives, fears, and experiences. Consequently, teacher preparation programs have an immense responsibility in preparing teachers for the insumensurable task of a critical, liberating educational experience for these communities who have been historically oppressed. For our Latinx teachers, in both the Puerto Rico and Texas contexts, this process is complicated by the own teacher's experiences in these oppressive contexts and their educational experiences often lacking these critical practices (Flores, 2017).

While taking the current socio-political context that impacts schooling and education into account is crucial, I argue it is not enough if teachers and students do not make connections to the colonial and imperial histories that gave birth to these systems.

A Shared History of Colonization and US Invasion. Puerto Rico's colonial history (Picó, 1986) begins in 1492 with Italian merchant Christopher Colombus' and the Crown of Castile's agreement to fund a maritime expedition to the West that would facilitate access to commercial trading with India without traversing around the African continent. In the document, *Capitulaciones de Granada*, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand agreed to provide two equipped ships and a list of benefits such as the title of almirant, viceroy, and governor of all "discovered" lands and one tenth of all the gold, pearls, and jewels, etc. found in the new territory. Contrary to popular belief, Colón and his men did not find the island of Boriquén (Puerto Rico) until his second, better-funded and better-prepared expedition in 1493. This new-found island, although claimed for the Spanish crown in 1493, was ignored until 1508 when Juan Ponce de León led an expedition and made contact with the Taíno Cacique Agüeybaná through a translator.

Although not the first Indigenous community to be documented in historical records (the *arcaicos* and *amerindios* have been recorded as the first inhabitants of the island), the Taínos were the local Indigenous community established in Borinquén at the time of the Spanish inquisition. The number of this population is unknown, but based on archaeological discoveries we know that these communities ranged between 50 and 500 members, sustained themselves from cassava, corn, and tobacco, other plants and hunting, engaged in the use of medicinal plants for healing, and practiced more complex activities that their predecessors such as pottery and crafting. Politically, they were organized hierarchically with the *naborias* engaging in the manual labor of the community, the *nitaínos* directing the military and influencing political decision making, and

a *cacique* with power over the community of 50-500 people. Although there is a lack of records about the Taíno sociopolitical structures, it is hypothesized that up to 15 women held the title of *cacicas* at the time of conquest. Regarding spirituality, the Taínos attributed superhuman events such as storms to deities represented in clay and stone. Yuquiyú and Juracán are well known, but there were many more. There are some documented religious ceremonies and celebrations such as the *areyto* in which the community sang, danced, and recited stories orally about battles and legends engaging in collective remembering (Alegría, 2003; Picó, 1986)

Following the modeled of exploitation developed for La Española (Haití and the Dominican Republic) the Spanish conquistadors quickly began forcing the local Taínos into mining and agricultural labor, but not into slavery yet. This change in labor patterns, changes in diet, and contact with new diseases started the quick decline in the Taíno population. In the Spring of 1511, Taínos from across the island in the South West devised a rebellion, killing between 150 and 200 Spanish men. This rebellion resulted in the burning of Taíno communities and official enslavement of those who survived the military attacks. By the 1520's, the Spanish considered the Taíno population extinct, and in an effort to emancipate the Indigenous peoples that were left in La Española and Boriquén in 1544, only sixty Taínos were found across both islands.

The next 300 plus years were marked by a pro-slavery society, financial crises, the exploitation of the island's natural resources by the colonizer, and the birth of *criollismo* or a collective Puerto Rican identity separate from Spain (Picó, 1986). This sense of collective identity led to various failed independence movements in collaboration with Cuban activists and the Cuban and Puerto Rican diaspora in New York. These initial movements were halted by the initial US intervention in Cuba against the Spanish government, after the US blamed Cuba for the explosion of a ship and the subsequent Spanish American War in 1989. On May 12th of 1989, the

US bombarded San Juan and, shortly after, fleets began invading the South of the island, making their way through the different municipalities. Some, like Ponce, surrendered after threats of bombarding civilian areas. Picó (1986) accounts how US soldiers were in a paradox of sorts, attacking the Puerto Rican *criollos* whom they had come to "liberate" (p.251) from Spanish forces. The Spanish American War ended in December of the same year with the Treaty of Paris, in which Spain relinquished Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, and military government on the island was established. Many more events marked Puerto Rico's history between the 1900 and today yet, I have limited myself to include a brief basis for Puerto Rico's colonial and imperial history. I now discuss the Mexican American community's struggles and resistance.

While it is critical to note that Mexico underwent a similarly brutal colonization process by Spain between the 1500 and 1700's, resulting in the death of an estimated 24 million Indigenous peoples, I focus on the more recent history of the Mexican American community in the United States, due to the context of my study regarding the preparation of mostly Mexican American teachers. In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo ended the Mexican American War and resulted in the US's conquest of 525,000 square miles of territory, or what we know today as parts of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Texas (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). With this event, Mexicans living within the conquered territory became conquered themselves, and thus began the long and persistent oppression and discrimination of the Mexican American community living in the US (Rendón, 1971). The civil and property rights of those Mexicans who decided to stay in the now US territory were violated, although protected on paper, and a process of brutal Americanization through schooling began. This process was marked with the "[removing] of all minority communities, languages and cultures from...the content of public education" (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p.360), removal of

Mexican American officials of schools and administrative offices, the removal of Spanish as the language of instruction, and the removal of culturally relevant content such as Catholicism and Mexican history from the curriculum. In place of this curriculum, Mexican American children were now to be educated in English, punished when using their Native language, and were to use books that included offensive comments and messages about their people, a process similar to the one experienced by Native Americans. With the 1920's and the 1930's and the invention of assessment tools such as the IQ tests, Mexican Americans faced new discrimination. Deemed intellectually inferior than Anglos, this group of students were further segregated into tracked education systems designed to prepare them for manual jobs.

Similarly, Mexican Americans resisted these efforts through agency and advocacy. Between the 1930's and 1950's, the Mexican American community took on organized resistance in the form of litigation, grassroot organizing, and academic research (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998) The Alvarez v. Lemon Grove (1931) court case, for example, was the country's first successful desegregation court case. Even though the judge's reasoning to desegregate included the project of Americanization and English acquisition, it still provided safer, more properly funded school buildings for Mexican American children. George I. Sanchez took another "accepted" route to advocating for Mexican American students by becoming one of the first Latino psychologists and challenging biased academic tracking systems based on IQ testing. This tracked system meant Mexican American children would get "inferior schooling based on tracking differentiation" (p.377). Within the Chicano movement in the Southwest, college students in some higher education institutions resisted this through the establishment of student organizations such as M.E.Ch.A, etc. and the institutionalization of Chicano Studies programs (Plan de Santa Barbara). For other Latinx community members in the 1960's, resistance took on

more deviant ways, such as school walkouts and protests that fell outside the “norm”. After years of following “more mainstream, accepted channels” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p.309) to advocate for more just educational practices, the community took different avenues to resist schools that devalued their language, culture, and ways of knowing.

These shared histories set the stage for the educational challenges both communities face today. Latinx students in both contexts continue to receive inequitable literacy education by teachers who are under prepared and under supported. The Latinx community in the US continues to have the highest high school dropout rate in the nation, compared to all ethnic groups (Gramlich, 2017). Back in Puerto Rico, the public education system has been under attack for years with the closure of over 300 public schools, attempts to establish for profit schooling, budget cuts to our public university of approximately 400 million dollars, among many other attacks on our education systems (Bonilla & Lebrón, 2019). These educational challenges, today's socio political and economic debacles, and colonial structures anchored in similar histories, all call for schools and teacher education programs to prepare teachers who are in the least willing to attempt to teach a critical and decolonizing education. In the next section, I provide an overview of the study and further argue for its need, based on the literature that is focused on literacy teacher preparation.

Research Purpose and Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was twofold. Broadly, this study aimed to provide pathways for Latinx children to engage in decolonizing critical literacy experiences that go well beyond developing basic, mechanical reading skills and that center opportunities for understanding and critique of their social realities and colonial histories. To do this, this project adds to the field of critical literacy teacher preparation by examining the preparation of Latinx literacy preservice

teachers in two reading methods courses across the Texas and Puerto Rico contexts. Methodologically, I designed this project as a critical case study (Carspecken, 1996; Thomas 2011) that adhered to some concepts of decolonizing methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Zavala, 2016). Regarding theory, this study bridged theoretical perspectives that stem from critical social theory (Bennett & LaCompte, 1990) with decolonial theory (Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007; Zavala, 2016) to examine the ways two cohorts of preservice teachers in different contexts, central Texas and Puerto Rico, were prepared to center decolonizing critical literacy in their teaching. In *Chapter 2*, I provide an overview of critical social theory in education (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2001, 2003), critical pedagogy (Darder, 2012; Freire, 1970), critical literacy (Vazquez, Hanks & Comber, 2019), and decolonial theory in education (Zavala, 2016). I argue that critical literacy theoretical framework and practices are in dire need of extension by decolonization frameworks.

Based on the research in the field of literacy and literacy teacher preparation, we know that although scholars have been concerned with providing all students with relevant and just educational experiences for many decades now (Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Nieto, 1991), the preparation of literacy teachers specifically for this task has been a more recent endeavor. These efforts have included preparing teachers for cultural diversity (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2000; Simon, 2015), for gender and sexuality diversity (e.g. Staley & Leonardi, 2016), for the inclusion of racial literacies (e.g. Skerrett, Pruitt, & Warrington, 2015; Souto-Manning & Price Dennis, 2012), and for bilingual classrooms (e.g. Fránquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011; Joseph & Evans, 2018) among other areas. Yet, very little is known about how we prepare Latinx teachers for critical literacies and even less about the

preparation of teachers for decolonial pedagogy. This study sought to address this gap by examining the preparation of Latinx, preservice teachers (PTs) across contexts.

Framed by the critical literacy and decolonial methodologies in education as well as what we know about literacy classrooms and the preparation of literacy teachers for decolonial and critical literacy practices, I proposed two areas of focus in my two article dissertation detailed in *Chapter 3*. First, I focused on the discourses related to anti-colonial critical literacy frameworks that emerged from the cross-context collaborations these PTs participated in. Close analysis of transcriptions of four collaborative sessions across the two contexts revealed that the preservice teachers discourses centered around *Awakenings, Restrictions & Ruptures,* and what I call the *Double Narrative Argument.* Awakenings referred to moments that jolted deep understandings of the critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and decolonial theories and methods by the PTs. Next, we saw what restrictions and ruptures PTs conceptualized for when this work can take place. Lastly, the double narrative argument referred to the PTs' justification of why both the traditional school curriculum *and* more critical narratives should be taught in the classroom. I discuss these findings in depth in *Chapter 4* of this dissertation.

The second area of focus of this dissertation centered on providing teacher educators and other practitioners with a possible model to engage in this type of critical collaborative project across transnational settings. A Snap-Shot Case Study (Thomas, 2016) methodology allowed me to capture how bilingual preservice teachers preparing to teach literacy took up anti-colonial theories and methods specifically, as part of the larger collaboration across two teacher education programs. Analysis of whole group and small group transcripts, as well as of class artifacts produced during the week of the collaboration and focused on de/anti-colonial methods, led me to

deeper understandings of how the preservice teachers understood and applied de/anti-colonial methods across settings. I present these findings in *Chapter 5* of this dissertation.

Research Questions Addressed in the Two Areas of Focus

Each research question responds to my areas of interest: the discourses that arose in these conversations and how those provide us with pedagogical implications for the broader field of literacy teacher preparation, and the value of the cross-context collaboration in itself.

1. What discourses emerge from the deliberate cross-context collaboration of preservice teachers while learning about critical literacies and anti-colonial frameworks?
2. How does a transnational collaboration, across teacher preparation programs in Texas and Puerto Rico, support preservice teachers' understandings and applications of anti-colonial theories and methods?

Conclusion

In the next section of my dissertation (*Chapters 2 & 3*), I describe the theoretical lens I used to view this work as both a teacher educator and a researcher, review the relevant literature, and provide an overview of the methodology used to conceptualize the larger study. I then present two stand alone articles (*Chapters 4 & 5*) in which I address my two areas of focus. In no way do these articles capture the entirety of my data set. They simply present the data that answered my two research questions in the form of journal length publishable articles. Both theoretical and practical applications are addressed, making my work accessible to a broader audience. *Chapter 6* of this dissertation describes the questions I have yet to answer and my future directions as a researcher.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

In this dissertation, I bridge theoretical perspectives that stem from critical social theory (Bennett & LaCompte, 1990) and decolonial theory (Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007; Zavala, 2016) to study the preparation of Latinx elementary preservice teachers for decolonizing critical literacy practices across the two contexts of Texas and Puerto Rico. I provide an overview of critical social theory in education (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2001, 2003) and how it frames my views of the social actors in my world, research, and practice. I then discuss critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), as well as criticism of Freire's work. Based on the context of my study, I make use of Darder's framework on critical bicultural pedagogy (2012). Darder (2012) adds to political theory and cultural democracy theories, providing a frame for transformative and liberating educational experiences of minority students in the United States specifically. Additionally, I draw on Bartolomé's (1994, 2000, 2004) application of critical pedagogy in the setting of teacher preparation. Both critical social theory in education as well as critical pedagogy channel into one of the two main frameworks of my work, which is critical literacy (Vazquez, Hanks & Comber, 2019). To conclude this section, I discuss critical literacy and decolonial theory in education (Zavala, 2016) more extensively; I argue that critical literacy theoretical frameworks and practices are in dire need of being extended by decolonization frameworks.

Critical Social Theory in Education. In response to social reproduction, which views social actors as passive and accepting of their place in society (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), and interpretative theories that focus on the construction of social reality between social actors in specific settings, critical social theory (Tierney, 1993) sees social participants as holding agency

in creating their social world. With origins in Marxist theory, the Frankfurt school, and into the work of Antonio Gramsci, it evolved from determinist views on society into hope for change. Critical social theory (Bennett & LaCompte, 1990) combines looking at social phenomena from both the macro and micro levels, acknowledging macro oppressive structures, while making space for individual agency within those systems. It views social and economic inequalities as sources of oppression of those who are less powerful. Social critical theory operates within contradictions and places people in opposing categories; if there is an oppressed person, there must be an oppressor. Researchers that view the world in this way are interested in the sources of inequalities in society, how individual agents respond to these oppressive systems (Freire, 1970), and how language and communication are used to uphold oppression (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 2004; Wodak, 2009).

Critical social theory in education (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2001, 2003) focuses on the relationship between schooling and society and how groups in power can use this social institution to uphold asymmetry through the reproduction of knowledge. Theorists such as Apple (2004) and Giroux (1983) focus on both the micro interactions in schools as well as the macro perspective, in viewing schooling as a large structure central to the reproduction of society. Critical social theory in education supposes that schools are sites where power struggles occur between those liberated and those oppressed, while being hopeful sites for the enactment, exertion, or potential for individual agency and resistance. Critical theorists in the education field argue that schools aid in reproducing a classed-based society by giving more value to and rewarding the social, economic and cultural capital of those in power (Giroux, 1983). In practical terms this includes linguistic practices, ways of being and learning, and pedagogical practices and

curricula, among other things of the dominant class. However, critical social theorists believe in human agency and in teachers', students' and other school community members' abilities to resist oppressive practices in schooling (Bennett & LaCompte, 1990). When critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2018) is achieved, individual actors are able to recognize these oppressive structures and work towards making schooling a site of liberation rather than oppression. I now turn to critical pedagogy, a theoretical framework that addresses the process of critical consciousness and liberation within schooling.

Critical Pedagogy and Bilingual Students. At the heart of critical pedagogy is the realization that education is a political act and educators are political actors either upholding or disrupting the economic and social systems of schools and society (Freire 1970/2018; 1993; Darder, 2015). In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2018) and subsequent work, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire laid out foundational ideas that transformed our views of education in the United States and around the world. Freire helped us see schools as sites of control where students are socialized to take their place in the social order. For him, schools operate in the sustenance of larger social, political, and economic structures and have the purpose of providing complacent workers and citizens. Through what Freire called a banking model of education, teachers who uphold the status quo focus on depositing a pre-selected curriculum into "empty" students, in favor of society's social and economic needs. In contrast, Freire proposed and practiced a problem-posing education model. In this model, teachers and students bring their social world into the classroom, deconstruct ideologies inherent in these worlds, and become aware of oppressor/oppressed dichotomies. Freire and other critical pedagogues (Darder, 2012; hooks, 2003) leave us with the hope that achieving critical consciousness and engaging in praxis

(critical reflection and taking action) can lead to the self liberation of those oppressed in schools and in the larger society.

As foundational as it is, Freire's work is not without critique (hooks, 1994). As a white, Brazilian male, Freire failed to address the intersectionality of gender, race, and linguistic identity in his work. Schooling in the United States, and bilingual education particularly, cannot be understood just within a critical pedagogy framework. Darder's (2012) conceptualization of critical bicultural pedagogy and praxis supports my understanding of the bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate spaces in which my study will take place. Darder (2012) argues that critical pedagogy, along with political theory and cultural democracy, can provide a framework for a liberating educational experience for Latinx, Black, Asian, Native American, Muslim, and other minoritized students. Darder (2012) calls for educational experiences in which these students can explore and understand how the dominant culture and language affects them and their communities. This is a pedagogy which helps students develop critical awareness and the "courage to question the structures of domination" (p.101) that affect their lives. Culturally relevant curricula and instruction in the students' native languages are an integral part of critical bicultural pedagogy. Lastly, emancipatory educators who hold a strong commitment to culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and communities, and who understand the political nature of teaching, are essential in this process.

In the context of teacher education, Bartolomé (2004) skillfully outlines how critical pedagogy must have a central space in teacher education programs for social change to occur. Drawing on Darder, Torres and Baltodano's (2002) work, she describes critical pedagogy as "primarily concerned with the kinds of educational theories and practices that encourage both

students and teachers to develop an understanding of the interconnecting relationship among ideology, power and culture" (p. 3). She discusses the significance of "infusing" (Bartolomé, 2004, p.98) teacher education programs with the principles and ideas of critical pedagogy as a way of preparing teachers who can name and interrogate unfair ideologies and practices in education settings and how these relate to power. This process must also include the development of "political clarity" in preservice teachers (Bartolomé, 2000). This means that preservice teachers engage in a process of "ever-deepening consciousness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape their lives, their capacity to transform such conditions...and the possible linkages between macro-level political, economic and social variables and subordinated groups' academic performance in the micro-level classroom" (Bartolomé, 2004, p.98). Based on her work with teachers, Bartolomé (2004) argues that educators have the power to act as change agents, as well as to create more just and democratic educational spaces for minoritized students who often experience oppressive practices in schools. Critical social theories in education and critical literacy frameworks provide a strong foundation for my work in regards to schools as social institutions and schooling practices in general; yet, critical literacy better frames my work specifically situated in the literacy classroom.

Critical Literacy. At the core of critical literacy is the idea that the teaching of literacy is a political act, far from neutral (Freire & Macedo, 1987). With roots in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2018), it seeks for children to become readers of not only words, but of their worlds, often interrogating power relations and inequities within literacy classrooms and society at large. As a framework, critical literacy (Luke 2012; Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys, 2002) enables educators to provide students with a transformative literacy experience that addresses issues of language,

culture, politics, and power. Luke (2012) defines the term critical literacy as using print and other media of communication "to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems and practices governing the social fields of everyday life" (p. 5).

In an older review of 30 years of professional literature on critical literacy, Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys (2002) identified four common possibilities for the role/functions of critical literacy (p. 382): "(a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice." For children whose identities, languages, and literacies have been historically marginalized, the taking action tenet is of particular importance because it allows them to "renam[e], reshap[e]... and redesign[e]" (Luke, 2012, p.9) the worlds they learn and live in. In a more recent conceptualization of the term, Vazquez, Hanks and Comber (2019) see critical literacy as a frame for all classroom teaching and learning and not just limited to literacy. They describe it as a process in which teachers and students constantly read their socially constructed worlds critically and engage in transformative action in each particular context across the globe. While the authors include theoretical perspectives that have influenced critical theory (e.g. feminist theory, critical race theory, critical media literacy, etc.) they see critical literacy as a "way of being...constructed organically using inquiry questions of learners... and defined by individuals in their own contexts" (p.302). While the authors of this article highlight the importance of differences in context when engaging in critical literacy work, they provide ten useful tenets that help frame my work. In relation to students, the authors propose teaching in a way that views critical literacy as an everyday lens, rather than a topic or unit to be covered. They center the valuable cultural and linguistic resources diverse students bring into the classroom, teaching from topics, issues or questions that are central

to student's lives. In relation to literacy, they consider how written and illustrated texts such as books and maps are never written in neutral ways and how readers do not read these texts in neutral ways either. Furthermore, this view of literacy includes reading the world as a text that has been socially constructed and critically "making sense of the sociopolitical systems through which we live our lives and questioning these systems [focusing] on social issues, including inequalities of race, class, gender, or disability…" (p. 307). Finally, they conceptualize critical literacy as a transformative process that can alter inequitable social practices and bring change through the redesign and production of texts, images, and practices that bring forth social justice in their worlds.

While critical theories, and critical literacy specifically, support my work by naming the social oppressive structures we operate within, including schooling, teacher preparation programs, and literacy classrooms, they are not enough to frame contexts operating within specifically colonial histories and structures. Since the field of decolonial theories and decolonial practices in education has been underexplored, little is known about the preparation of literacy preservice teachers for this task. I draw on decolonial theory (Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007) and Zavala's (2016) conceptualization of decolonial methodologies in education to extend the field of critical literacy teacher preparation and literacy teaching across contexts.

Decolonial Theory. Decolonial theory is concerned with naming our human and social state as a product of the colonial project and with recognizing the present colonial structures that reign our everyday life. This goes beyond the social and economic inequalities named and criticized in critical social theory, and names colonialism as the inception of these inequalities. At its core, it "brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" and is not a metaphor that

should be utilized interchangeably with critical social justice frameworks (Tuck & Yang, 2012). While this is a critical consideration that should not be ignored, educational scholars have extended the term (or appropriated it) to apply to the decolonization of educational practices, including what counts as knowledge (e.g. Zavala, 2016).

According to Mignolo (2011a) the term decoloniality came to be in the 1950's when Asian and African countries, and later Latin American ones, came together to design a "third-way"(p.2) beyond capitalism or communism, the two prevailing Western narratives. Today, decoloniality is concerned with global and economic justice, while displacing socialism and democracy as the only two options to guide our thinking and doing. Mignolo (2011) calls this idea of not accepting the options presented to us as "delinking" (p.5). If we delink, however, something new has to be created as a third option: decoloniality. This imagining of something new requires "border thinking" (p.3), a space between the experiences of the colonized and the colonial frameworks we operate within. The idea of border thinking is useful for me as I operate both within academia and my Puerto Rican community in a colonized body.

Important to the Puerto Rican context that forms part of my dissertation, Quijano's (2007) work is framed from the Latin American perspective. He centers race as the most important element of social organization established by colonizers. Quijano draws the relationship between race and the labor market as "structurally linked and mutually reinforcing" (p.184). With whites having access to paid wages and entrepreneurship, etc. they were placed at an advantage for controlling the world economic market. This led to the perception that wages were a privilege only for whites and that naturally other races were meant to create profits for their owners. This labor structure resulted in enslaved Black and Brown bodies and the almost genocide of

Indigenous peoples, as they were exploited for manual labor, among other causes. This is relevant to both contexts of my dissertation, but hits closer to home in Puerto Rico, where the Taino population was almost eradicated during the Spanish conquest, which might lead to difficulties in imagining aspects of a decolonizing, Indigenous centered educational practices that were more radically erased than in other Latin American countries.

One of Quijano's (2007) main points is that modern capitalism cannot be understood fully without understanding colonialism and colonial racial and labor market structures. This is impactful to education; Western Europe positioning itself as a world economic power also meant they held power in determining and controlling valued forms of "subjectivity, culture, knowledge and the production of knowledge" (p.189). This had material implications around the world, and Latin America specifically, as the colonizers suppressed Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and forced assimilation into European culture. Quijano (2007) calls this the "colonization of cognitive perspectives" (p.189), which naturally has had implications to what we teach and how we teach literacy today. This Western modernist view of knowledge centers European knowledge as obvious, universal, sent from god and as no longer a mere point of view. Quijano posits that this view on European knowledge not only supports colonialism, but was a "foundational part of the power structure of domination" (Quijano, 2007, p.174). This view of knowledge also permeates the educational practices and literacy practices we see as neutral and natural. At the same time, it leaves little or no space for what Mignolo (2000) calls "the enunciation and expression of non-Western cosmologies and for the expression of different cultural, political and social memories" specific to our contexts within teaching and learning. It is important to note that I draw on theories emerging from the Latin American experience based on

the context of my study, but there are many other important North American/Native American perspectives on decolonial theory as well (e.g. Smith, 2013).

In this dissertation, I primarily drew on Zavala's (2016) conceptualization of decolonial methodologies in education. I bridged his framework and critical literacy theory to delineate a framework that informs my research, instruction, and the development of possible decolonial literacy practices offered to preservice teachers as they work with elementary school children in two different contexts.

Decolonial Theory in Education. Zavala (2016) suggests a series of methods that can be applied in different educational contexts, formal and informal. He uses the term educational contexts in a very specific way, referring to education as "a site of struggle and rupture" (p. 1) where people come together in dialogue to discuss and respond to colonialism. My work opens this space of dialogue across the Texas and Puerto Rico contexts and asks preservice teachers to reflect on socio-historical and contemporary contexts while applying these methods and strategies in their literacy teaching. Before diving into the education strategies proposed, Zavala (2016) summarizes for us what he considers the three main strategies of the decolonial project within his framework. These three ideas provide important theoretical underpinnings to my work and the preservice teacher's applications of these ideas. First, he argues that the decolonial project tries to undo our understandings of European and US modernity and with them the idea that its inventions are superior to those of native peoples. This challenges the idea of colonialism as a natural and obvious process, and allows us to challenge our views on education, and the teaching of literacy specifically, as already pre-established. Second, it creates space for a particular border thinking, or what he calls working from the margins, allowing me to operate from both the

academic/scholarly colonized space as a researcher and from my place as a member of my geographically marginalized community. This working from "the cracks" also allows preservice teachers to envision themselves as decolonizing critical literacy educators while working within oppressive and colonizing state, district, and school systems. Third, the decolonial project opens a door to engage in educational practices that reclaim and develop knowledges and knowledge systems that have been historically repressed and erased. This project invites us to both recover these past knowledges and generate new ways of knowing that are relevant to our contexts and the contexts of our elementary school children today. In my work, I invite preservice teachers to reclaim these knowledges from their own pasts while opening spaces for children to do the same and generate knowledge and ways of doing literacy that are relevant to their socio-cultural and political contexts today. Zavala's (2016) work offers three methodologies or strategies: *counter/storytelling, healing,* and *reclaiming.* He explains that these are not linear ideas but rather interlock as he shows in the diagram provided here.

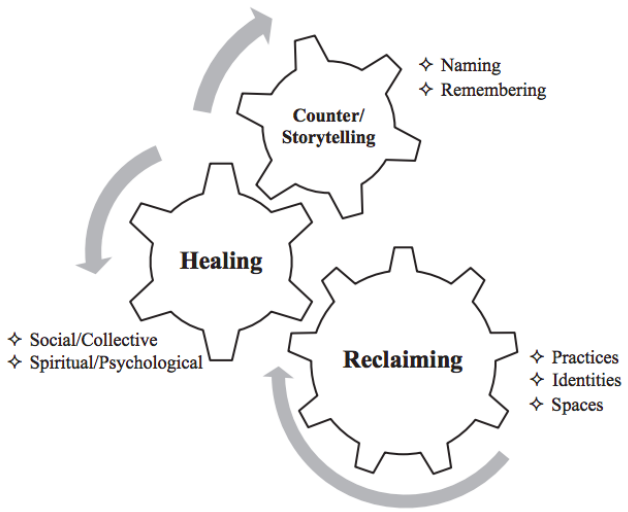

Figure 1: Decolonial
Methodologies/Strategies in Education (Zavala, 2016, p. 3)

Counter/Storytelling. Counter/Storytelling emerges from the critical literacy (Freire, 1970) tradition of dialogue and reflection. Scholars in the field of Critical Race Theory and Latinx Critical Theory have taken on and extended the practice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). It centers on providing people with a language of critique that goes beyond naming and critiquing oppressive social structures that are inequitable to members of society based on their class, race, geder, abilities, etc. Instead it focuses on people naming their social worlds as encircled by colonialism and its structural arrangements and on developing a language of critique for this state. This practice of naming requires collective dialogue and reflection of people's past and contemporary experiences. Naming is deeply connected to the practice of remembering. This includes understanding the present in relation to colonialism, remembering and restoring who we are as Indigenous people, and engaging in this process of remembrance as a collective process within our families and communities. One example of this in the classroom might be the retelling of Texas history around the Alamo from the Black and Indigenous perspectives and framed within the US and Texas imperial conquest of Mexican lands.

Healing. The process of colonization takes aways who we are in relation to ourselves, each other, our communities, our land, and our knowledges. Healing is central in the process of recovering from this brutal process and healing from collective trauma. It can take place individually or in community through dialogue and action. Unlike renaming and remembering, which can be considered cognitive or intellectual processes according to Zavala (2016), healing is often seen as having no space in educational projects. Consequently, the very concept of healing through education challenges Western conceptions of education and research in educational spaces. Noteworthy to my work, healing is also omitted from Critical Pedagogy and Critical

Literacy theories and practices, thus my project opens up spaces for preservice teachers and young children to engage in healing, if they decide to, by engaging in literacy practices. It is important to note that the practice of engaging in healing in the literacy classroom might generate pushback by some if framed as a religious practice; this point might be of some concern for preservice teachers. One concrete example of healing in the literacy classrooms might be the creation of dialogues, texts, and written projects that center healing from the current brutal immigration situation in the US/Mexico border (Ramsey, 2020) or the recent natural disasters events in Puerto Rico that have been exacerbated by US neglect (Lin, 2020).

Reclaiming. The concept of reclaiming is closely related to praxis in Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970) or taking transformative action within Critical Literacy (Vazquez, Hanks & Comber, 2019). It is the process of reclaiming who we are as peoples, our identities, histories, practices, and our relationship to land and place. This includes ancestral, indigenous knowledges, but also local knowledges and ways of doing teaching and learning. Examples of this are the battles for Ethnic studies across the Southwest and efforts to include land-based education in the curriculum (García, Ruiz Bybee & Urrieta, 2016). Reclaiming takes back our close relationship to nature and challenges the idea that economic progress comes before protecting natural resources. This can take a variety of shapes in the literacy curriculum dependent on context and student interest, but some examples include a focus on climate change as it impacts our local communities or a project focused on the dumping of coal ashes in the west of Puerto Rico in recent years.

Counter/storytelling, healing, and reclaiming are all interrelated processes and cannot operate without each other. For example, while an elementary classroom in Puerto Rico might be

working on healing through dialogues and literacy practices after the 2017 Hurricane María, it is critical that students and teachers question the government's poor response to the emergency and draw connections to the US/PR colonial status.

Decolonizing Critical Literacies. I argue the need for both theoretical frameworks for several reasons. From a practical point of view, the critical literacy framework, although still underutilized in diverse contexts, has been taken up by scholars for decades studying how this occurs in educational spaces and, to some extent, how it occurs in teacher education. There is valuable knowledge in this field of work because some of the challenges of engaging in critical work both in schools and in teacher education programs, which are explored in the literature (e.g.,Wetzel, et al., 2019, see the *Review of the Literature* section*),* informs my work. Importantly, decolonial theories in education extend the field of critical literacy by bringing the focus back to histories of colonization and the contemporary colonial structures that impact our lives, social structures, and educational practices today. I use the term *decolonizing critical literacies* from now on to refer to the work of preparing preservice teachers to engage in educational practices with elementary schools that cut across both the critical literacy and decolonial theories in education frameworks.

Review of the Literature

In this section, I begin by reviewing literature that provides insight into how and where educators have been engaging in critical literacy practices within K-12 classrooms. I then discuss some examples of how decolonial theories in education have been taken up by scholars and practitioners in both formal and informal educational spaces. Subsequently, I review the literature on the preparation of literacy teachers for transformative literacy practices, critical literacy, and

decolonial practices across contexts. I end with a brief section reporting on the collaborations across educational programs, universities, and teacher education programs that inform the design of my work and argue why the collaboration across contexts is significant to the field of teacher preparation for decolonizing critical literacy practices.

Critical Literacy in Classrooms. A large portion of the research on critical literacy has focused on text based approaches that center the practice of unpacking power relations, multiple perspectives in a text, and how to make sense of those perspectives (e.g. Jones, 2013; Kim, 2014; Labadie, Pole & Rogers, 2013; Spector & Jones, 2007). An example of this is Spector and Jones' work (2007) around 8th graders learning about the Holocaust through deconstructing *The Diary of Anne Frank*. In their study, the students deconstructed their preconceived ideas about Anne Frank by reading three different editions of her diary. In another example, pre-schoolers in Kim's (2014) class engaged in critical analysis of children's books, explored diverse perspectives, and challenged traditional Korean gender roles through their writing. The author found that these books encouraged the children to have a critical attitude about gender roles and that these conversations led the children to feel more empowered to pass judgement about the books they read. In both of these examples, the multiple text analyses complicated the students' initial understandings of the text themselves, interrogating multiple viewpoints, and disrupted the common place; this is an example of a common critical literacy practice in the literature.

A growing body of work has focused on the ways in which students pursue taking action and engage actively in promoting social justice. In Lee's (2017) work, she utilized children's literature and the children's everyday experiences as points of departure for fifth graders to engage in action, such as writing a petition for gender fairness in their school and to impact the

school climate. Norton (2005) shared how Pam, a first grade student, read the inequitable actions of her teachers and engaged in critical literacy to "affirm her classed, aged, and student identities and intervene in against inequitable teaching pedagogies" (p.125). In another example, an Australian teacher (Comber et al., 2001) engaged her second/third grade class in critical literacy practices through an urban renewal project. Through a curriculum that centered on the students' concerns, the students and teachers engaged in inquiry around an urban renewal project that would affect the entire community and would displace some of the students. They conducted polls about how these changes would affect their families and neighbors, designed alternative plans for the project, faxed local authorities, and mailed their products to project officers and council members. This critical literacy experience engaged students in action and change, while developing grade-level language and literacy skills through complex collaboration, research, and the production of maps, diagrams, and letters.

Some in the field of critical literacies have implemented these pedagogies in bilingual classrooms (e.g. de los Ríos, 2018; Flores-Dueñas, 2005; Peterson & Chamberlain, 2015), with Spanish speaking children (e.g. Medina & Costa, 2010; Medina & Costa, 2013) and with Latinx children (e.g. Torres & Tayne, 2017). Other Latinx scholars (e.g. Osorio, 2015; 2018a; 2018b) engage in work consistent with Lewison and colleagues' (2002) functions of critical literacy in which they engage in deep critical historization, considering multiple viewpoints, addressing sociopolitical issues, and taking action, though not calling their work critical literacy.

For example, in de los Ríos' (2018) work she explored how Joaquín, a U.S.-Mexican transnational high school student, enacted critical literacy through corridos, a genre of Mexican music that gives a voice to injustice and border tensions. Joaquín was an avid composer of

corridos outside of school and this practice was supported in his Chicanx/Latinx studies course. In this way, the teacher encouraged the ways in which Joaquín moved beyond what traditionally "counted" as literacy and used his full linguistic repertoire. In the 1st grade classroom in Flores-Dueñas' (2005) study, the children were exposed to culturally and socially relevant texts and critical discussions after the reading in both English and Spanish. The children in the study improved their reading levels in both languages while participating in critical questioning of the texts. Torres & Tayne (2017) used the superhero genre to allow Latinx elementary students to author counternarratives through stories set in their communities. The authors of the piece found that the children were able to engage with, and speak back to, xenophobic and racist discourse fueled by the 2016 presidential campaigned and "allowed youth to engage in critical hope" (p.376). In this work the authors create spaces for Latinx young children to develop literacy around sociopolitical issues and engage in social justice through the creation of their narratives.

In Osorio's (2015) piece, "Qué es deportar?," a second grade teacher was concerned about her Latinx student´s lack of representation in the books handed down to her by the school administration. Using literature circles, she was able to give her students the opportunity to choose texts that reflected their lives such as *From North to South (*Colato Laínez, 2013). Although her article seems to be about offering a mirror to students through culturally relevant texts in literature circles, this instructional practice offered students opportunities to engage in critical literacy practices. By making space for "students' fears" (p.30), the teacher was able to engage the children in critical conversations that connect to their own experiences related to deportation. Furthermore, students connected their experiential knowledge to larger power discourses such as racism in the United States, often portrayed in the media, and challenged

dominant discourses around immigration in the US/Mexico and across the world.

Collectively, these pieces take up the question of what critical literacy can look like in monolingual and bilingual/biliterate and Latinx spaces across grade levels. My work builds on this body of literature by integrating aspects of decolonial theory. I now turn to the literature that addresses the implementation of decolonial theory in educational spaces outside and inside of school.

Decolonial Practices in Educational Spaces. The study of decolonial strategies and practices within the realm of education and literacy education specifically is a growing field across the globe (e.g. Cervantes & Saldaña, 2015; Medina, in press; Quayle et al., 2015; Villanueva, 2013). These educational and literacy practices are varied in modality including performance (Medina, in press), music (Cervantes & Saldaña, 2015), as well as art and oral storytelling (Quayle et al., 2015).

In Medina's (in press) qualitative case study in the United States colonial territory of Puerto Rico, she studies a group of youth activist performers and how they make sense of the social, political, and economic conditions in the island through their performances, while creating spaces for a reimagined future. Medina challenges the idea of sharing "findings" and shares in the form of a story, retelling how the group of young performers use their literacy resources to resist through improvisation. Through the non-traditional theatre piece, the performers had space to improvise scripts based on how they related to the current social, political, and economic debacles on the island. Themes regarding for-profit fundamentalist religion, government corruption, hopelessness, and homelessness, among others, were prominent in the work. Moreover, these artists use improvisation to foreshadow two critical events in Puerto Rican history: the 2017

natural disaster Hurricane María and summer 2019 rise of the people in massive protests resulting in the island's governor's resignation. Through their performance, not only did these artists engage with the complexity of adding a natural disaster to the mix of governmental corruption and instability, but they also dared to imagine a future where these structures of power could, and would, soon be dismantled to some extent.

In another example spanning a school-community partnership, which the authors call public pedagogy, Quayle et al. (2015) share how the Community Arts and Cultural Development project in Australia can intervene in the reproduction of meaning through counter-storytelling. Part of a larger qualitative study which sought to capture and preserve the stories and cultural practices of Indigenous groups in the area, this particular set of data focused on capturing portraits and stories of 16 Noongar Indigenous Elders. In collaboration with a local school, indigenous youth had the chance to listen to, record, and photograph their stories and then make them into film. The stories included narratives of survival on reserves, being taken away from their families, language and culture suppression, but also included stories about living happy lives in family and community. Professional and student artists, mostly non-indigenous, created all the portraits. All the work was exhibited at Western Australian Museum in 2014 where more than 20,000 people visited the exhibition and the indigenous community got to reclaim space in a traditionally white institution. The author found two themes in the data: *cultural continuity* referring to the spaces created for the Elders to share their stories of survival that promote connectedness and continuity, and *recognition and acknowledgement*, through which the Elders asserted the need for a collective recognition and consciousness of the history of dispossession, repression, and assimilation as well as the continuous struggles of the community.

In the local context of the Southwestern United States, Chicanx scholars Cervantes & Saldaña (2015) focus on the use of *nueva canción* and hip hop musical genres with their undergraduate students in their process of critiquing and delinking from coloniality. In the form of an essay, they share their critical analysis of three hip hop songs and how the lyrics critique multiple layers of coloniality and oppression in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Cuba. The authors also share their experiences using *nueva canción* and hip hop in their Latino Cultural Expressions course as a pedagogical tool of decolonization. These pedagogical moves expose their students, who identify mostly as Chicanx, to critiques of US notions of nationality and citizenship, US political and economic imperialism, and give them the tools to engage in action and the collective struggle of social justice through music as pedagogical praxis. In their ongoing work, these activist scholars have found resistance to their work as some students continue to embrace colonialism, for example, through the attachment to the Alamo as a local cultural symbol and through the negation of racism in the US citizenship process. Yet, there is great promise in their work as students get to reflect and make connections between the songs discussed in class and themes in their lives such as immigration, occupation of land, and US/Mexico border relations, as well as reflect on the lives of others such as Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, and the U.S. intervention and corporatization in the Caribbean, among other topics.

The use of these strategies span different spaces such as community organizations, the high school classroom, and university courses. However, very little is known regarding how to engage in decolonizing critical literacies with elementary school children. Furthermore, for decolonizing critical literacy practices to occur in classrooms, teacher preparation programs must

make a concerted effort in including, if not centering, these theories and practices in their curriculum. I now review the literature focused on the preparation of literacy teachers for transformative practices over all and for critical literacy and decolonial practices in education specifically.

Teacher Preparation for Transformative Literacy Practices. Although scholars have been concerned with providing all students with relevant and just educational experiences for many decades now (Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Nieto, 1991) the preparation of literacy teachers for this task is a more recent endeavour. In 2000 in a themed issue of the *Journal of Literacy Research,* Xu (2000) made a call for the integration of multicultural issues in literacy methods courses across the country. Since then, the field has been more concerned (Wetzel, et. al., 2019) with the preparation of literacy teachers to meet these needs in more just ways for our ever diversifying student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These efforts have included preparing teachers for cultural diversity (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 2000; Simon, 2015), for gender and sexuality diversity (e.g. Staley & Leonardi, 2016), for the inclusion of racial literacies (e.g. Skerrett, Pruitt, & Warrington, 2015; Souto-Manning & Price Dennis, 2012), for bilingual classrooms (e.g. Fránquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011; Joseph & Evans, 2018) among other areas. In this section, I focus on the literature on preparing teachers for critical literacy practices and review the scant literature on the preparation of teachers for decolonial pedagogy.

Preparation of Teachers for Critical Literacy. Preparing teachers for critical literacy teaching is of crucial importance in a time of such political, social, racial and economic turmoil in the United States and across the world. Yet, few studies in the field of literacy teacher preparation

focus specifically on preparing teachers with this theoretical framework in mind. In a review of the literature of almost 30 years, Hendrix-Soto & Wetzel (2019) could only locate 26 articles that explicitly mentioned the preparation of teachers for critical literacy. Notably, the majority of these (20) focused on text based approaches for teaching critical literacy through children's literature and academic texts. In only 5 were the preservice teachers guided to engage in critical literacy practices themselves through inquiry, research, critical conversations. and/or autobiographical work. In a broader review of the literature that included over 100 articles focused on the preparation of teachers for sociocultural knowledges and understandings (Wetzel, et al., 2019), few articles focused on the preparation of teachers for critical literacy practices (Dávila, 2011; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Lohfink, 2014; Saunders, 2012) and only eight of these occurred in or were attached to a field experience. I now review exemplary pieces that take up the task of preparing teachers for critical literacy across different contexts.

In the preschool setting, Norris, Lucas and Prudhoe (2012), worked with 27 white preservice teachers enrolled in their "Diversity Perspectives in Early Childhood Education" course. After the teacher educators modeled reading texts critically lifting hidden messages, the preservice teachers were asked to analyze their favorite book as a child looking for messages of power, race, gender, class, etc. The preservice teachers were then invited to use McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004)'s model and strategies to pick a children's book and plan a lesson that included a critical literacy element to be presented to their undergraduate peers. The researchers found that all preservice teachers found critical literacy beneficial, yet they were concerned about their own anxiety in addressing "touchy subjects" (p.62), "offending anyone by overstepping their boundaries" (p.62) or challenging district curricula.

In another example inside the teacher preparation classroom in an urban education program, Skerrett's (2010) secondary preservice teachers engaged in inquiry projects centered on investigating social justice issues over the two semesters. Some of the issues that were included in the inquiry projects were abuse, dating violence, and hunger. This experience of conducting the inquiry themselves supported the teachers in allowing them to experience the process and challenges of doing such work before asking students to do so. As supported by the literature (Wetzel, et. al., 2019), preservice teachers in this study reported discomfort with critical topics, yet the author found hope in the personal and political growth of the teachers and in their dispositions to engage in critical literacy teaching based on her observations of their deep engagement and satisfaction from learning about social issues and developing their social action plans.

Very few studies have taken up the task of preparing preservice teachers for critical literacy through a field experience (Mosley, 2010; Rogers et. al., 2016; Saunders, 2012). In Mosley's study (2010), literacy preservice teachers engaged in New Literacy Studies and critical literacy practices over two semesters through a 1:1 tutoring experience and then in their student teacher placement. The author focused on two students out of 19 preservice teachers based on their engagement with the practices in their work with second graders. Data included videos of four total lessons during tutoring while the preservice teachers used text based approaches to critical literacy. Findings focused on how the field experience, as well as reflecting with peers and faculty, led the preservice teacher in "approximations" (p.406) to critical literacy through their choices of texts, how they led conversations, and how they evolved in their own ideas about their teaching practices. Mosley argues that approximations must be validated as a starting point, but

that these are not enough and that teacher educators must continue to provide "direction and critique of practices that perpetuate racism, inequality, and static notions of literacy" (p.423).

Similarly, Saunder's (2012) study focused on the practices of one preservice teacher during her internship and student teacher semesters as she immersed her class of high school juniors in critical literacy activities against the odds. In the racially and socio-economically divided school, Ms. Morgan's class was considered the "dumping ground" (p.19) of the English classes for students who were not considered college bound by the system. The preservice teacher's critique of the system and high expectations for her students were supported by the cooperating teacher and made her work possible. Students engaged in the use of cultural artifacts that were of their interest, read alternative texts outside the curriculum, and engaged in out of school literacies as they gained agency. Although the process was not perfect, and at times the preservice teachers let conversations about power and justice wind down in order to "keep peace" (p.21), this novice preservice teacher took risks and challenged established practices in order to engage in critical literacy practices with her cooperating teacher's support.

The reviewed articles on the preparation of preservice teachers for critical literacies all occurred in monolingual English classrooms. While some have taken up the implementation of critical literacy in bilingual and Latinx spaces (see above *Critical Literacies in the Classroom* section), there is a scarcity of knowledge focused on the preparation of bilingual and Latinx educators for critical literacy specifically. Just as the highschoolers in Saunders' study, bilingual Latinx students who are often considered English Language Learners are unjustly excluded from critical literacy practices. This is detrimental because it perpetuates the idea that bilingual students should be focused on the acquisition of English and do not have time to engage in transformative

and liberatory literacy practices such as critical literacies. I argue that critical literacy, as well as decolonial practices, are crucial for minority school children as they are the most impacted by oppressive structures not only in schooling, but outside of school as well. I now review the few studies that take up the preparation of teachers for decolonial practices.

Preparation of Teachers for Decolonial Practices. Teacher education provides critical spaces where "problematic narratives...might be revealed, challenged and interrupted this so they are not thoughtlessly reproduced in schooling" (Kerr, 2014, p.84). However, teacher education programs must play their part if we hope for a critical decolonizing literacy education. Yet, in the US and Puerto Rico, very little is known about how to engage teachers in critical reflection regarding colonialism and their preparation for a decolonizing teaching practices. In contrast, our colleagues in Canada in the field of teacher education have begun the task of engaging preservice teachers with indigenous perspectives (Dion, 2007; Haig-Brown, 2009; Kerr, 2014).

For instance, Kerr (2014), a self-identified settler, works with teacher candidates in Canada and centers indigenous perspectives and decolonial frameworks in her pedagogy courses. She found a deep sense of resistance and passivity when engaging in indigenous perspectives through films and a guest speaker. She shares how her teacher candidates perceived these perspectives as "difficult knowledges" or refusals to know and engage, (p.94) and exhibited anger at a guest scholar's use of the word spirituality when talking about public education. Kerr (2014) came to the realization that these teacher candidates had a deep incapacity to engage in these topics because of the fear of the loss of privileges and material benefits (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In other words, these Indigenous perspectives challenged the views the teacher candidates had of themselves as benevolent, while putting their rights to the land in question. She suggests that

teaching attentiveness, or the ability to be ready to listen, while making transparent the likelihood of resistance, might help when engaging in these types of conversations. She found how meeting teacher candidates in a "middle ground space" (p.101) where they are invited to make sense of their ideas and resistance, while not being left in guilt, can be generative.

Similarly, Haig-Brown (2009) centered Aboriginal peoples' experiences and histories in schooling in what she calls the decolonizing of education courses. In her Foundations of Education course, which usually begins with the education of settlers' children, this teacher educator introduces her course by establishing land and Aborignal communities as the foundation of education in Canada. Discussions around Indigenous communities' every day educational practices and ceremonies, and their later experiences with assimilationist policies and practices, lead teacher candidates from all backgrounds to engage in deep reflection. In one example, a Black teacher candidate of Jamaican descent connected her traumatic experiences with racism to the colonial history in Canada and began to see herself in relation not only to White people in her city, but to Indigenous peoples and their land as well. She understood her own history as twice displaced (from Africa and then Jamaica) in relation to colonialism; this deeper understanding of history helped her begin her healing process in her new home.

Both Kerr's (2014) and Haig-Brown's (2009) conceptualizations included reflections of their own work with teacher candidates regarding the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, histories, and experiences with schooling, yet Dion (2007) offers us a method for teachers to engage in a "pedagogy of remembrance" (p.330) and consider themselves in relationship to Aboriginal people. Dion (2007) argues that although schools and teachers are being encouraged to

include Aborigonal content in their lessons, there is a limited understanding of Aboriginal culture, history, and people, and these narratives are informed by dominant discourses in Canada.

As in Kerr's (2014) work, the teachers in Dion's (2007) study position themselves at first as benevolent strangers, claiming knowing nothing about and having nothing to do with Aboriginal people, as they aim to protect themselves from the fear of having to recognize their own roles in the colonial project. However, through the process of remembrance the teachers are able to juxtapose cultural artifacts such as pictures from their own lives to class texts, visuals, or other artforms in order to see themselves in relation to their histories alongside Aboriginal people. The author found that while teachers are often fearful of confrontation, seeming ignorant or going against parents in schools when discussing these histories, the assignment in class offered a space to engage with these alternate ways of knowing while lessening fear and resistance. This course experience allowed the teachers to recognize their own role and investment in the dominant discourse about Aborinal people in Canada. Additionally, some teachers began to change the content they included in their curriculum, including texts and media by Aboriginal authors and artists. The inclusion of storytelling as a valid practice and introduction of questioning regarding Aboriginal communities and land emerged in their teaching practices as well.

The work of teacher educators in Canada provides me with a point of departure when thinking about the preparation of teachers for decolonizing critical literacy instruction in teacher education programs in the United States as well as in Puerto Rico. The content included in the courses mentioned above made space for the often silenced histories and experiences of Indigenous communities and these experiences pushed teacher candidates to reflect on their own identities in relationship to these groups and to settler colonialism. In my work, I go a step further

by asking preservice teachers to collaboratively reflect on their own relationships to colonialism across contexts and to then engage in decolonizing critical literacy practices with young children in both Texas and Puerto Rico. I now turn to literature regarding collaborations across universities and teacher education programs.

Collaborations across Universities and Teacher Preparation Programs. In the field of teaching and teacher education, collaboration is not rare, yet some types of professional collaboration are more common than others. Collaborations across teacher education programs and schools are common and have been occurring since the late 1890's (Bookhart & Loadman, 2011). These aim to bring school stakeholders and teacher educators and educational researchers together as equal partners to better educational experiences for children. Other types of collaboration include the exchange of content knowledge across distinct teacher preparation programs areas in order to supplement the learning experiences of preservice teachers such as in the case of language learning and special education (Stein, 2011). Collaborations between education programs across higher education institutions are not as widespread (Duffield, Olson &Kerzman, 2012). Duffield and colleagues (2012) argue that teacher preparation programs often compete with one another for enrollment and operate under distinct missions as individual entities, making collaboration uncommon. In their work describing the partnership between three teacher education programs, they found that collaboration was beneficial for the recruitment, preparation, and induction support of high quality teachers. Their work, however, captured macro challenges and benefits from institutional collaborations. To address this gap, this dissertation project will zoom in to pay closer attention to preservice teacher learning and pedagogical implementations across the Texas and Puerto Rico contexts.

In a similar effort, Fránquiz & Pratt (2011) collaborated across central Texas and Puerto Rico. In the summers of 2008 and 2009, the researchers (In Lapp & Fisher, 2011) conducted a collaboration through the professional development of in-service writing teachers in the Proyecto Maestría and the MayaWest Writing Summer Institute programs. They used a Chicana femenist framework (Anzaldúa, 1987) and third space theory to describe how teachers came together through the use of video conferencing to learn about literacy events and practices across contexts. The authors found that teachers shared similar challenges in their teaching practices, such as overcoming their fears of writing and handling standardized measures both on the island and in the mainland. Additionally, teachers were also able to empathize with issues in one context and reflect on how that impacted their own schools, as in the example of one teacher who questioned how both contexts prepared children as speakers of academic English for higher education in her written reflection. Another teacher reflected on how technology enabled the breaking of barriers and the coming together under one same goal across contexts, and a different educator implemented the use of Skype with her own students later on. Although my work will make use of similar technology across similar contexts, it pushes the boundaries of how we look at the teaching of literacy in bilingual classrooms, using a decolonizing critical frame and will push the reflection of preservice teachers in their own identities across colonized contexts.

Conclusion. The reviewed literature leads us to understand the need to provide preservice teachers with field experiences that allow them to reflect upon, try on, and engage in transformative literacy practices while being supported by their teacher educators. We also see in the literature a scarcity of research addressing the implementation of these practices in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, and consequently, the preparation of literacy teachers for

these practices in diverse spaces. Given these gaps, I argue that the project undertaken leads to generative findings, as I gained understanding of the ways two cohorts of preservice teachers in different contexts, central Texas and Puerto Rico, were prepared to center decolonizing critical literacy in their literacy planning. Because critical literacies and decolonial pedagogies are such contextual processes, there is great value in looking at the implementation of these theories across contexts. In the next chapter I outline the methodology for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

In this critical case study, I brought together decolonial and critical literacy frameworks to examine the ways two cohorts of preservice (PT) teachers in different contexts, central Texas and Puerto Rico, were prepared to center decolonizing critical literacy in their teaching. I focused on two areas that became the guide for my two sets of findings, which are organized here as two publishable articles. Overall, I sought to examine the preservice teachers in relation to their past and current contexts, asking how those contexts have influenced their growth as decolonial critical literacy teachers. The first article, or *Chapter 4*, focuses on the critical discourses that emerged from collaborations across the cohorts, including what was to be gained from this deliberate crossing of borders in teacher preparation. *Chapter 5*, a practitioner piece, explores how the transnational collaboration in itself supported preservice teachers' understandings and applications of de/anti-colonial theories and methods. While I initially sought to answer additional research questions, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted my research project, and I was not able to gain understandings of how PTs translated decolonial critical literacy theories into pedagogical practices with young children. This is an important area of further research for myself and the field of critical literacy teacher preparation.

Research Design

Case Study Methodology. This research project was designed as a critical case study (Carspecken, 1996; Thomas 2011) that followed the principles of decolonial theory in education (Zavala, 2016). For my case study, I was guided by Thomas (2011) in the way that I conceptualized both the larger case study as well as the snapshot methodology used in *Chapter 5*. According to Thomas (2011), the case study methodology involves looking at one thing as a

whole, in detail, while not looking to generalize from it. Case study is not a method per se, but rather a focus of study, or the idea of focusing on one particular thing under study. According to Stake (2005), case study is not a methodological choice but rather a choice of what it is to be studied. This methodology allowed me to focus on the collaboration across contexts between the two cohorts of preservice teachers. Simons (2009) provides a more robust definition of case study: "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular [thing under study]" (p.10). This approach was ideal, since I was looking at the preservice teachers in different contexts and using multiple methods of data collection while bringing together both the critical literacy and decolonial theoretical frameworks.

Critical Case Studies. Since my work is concerned with critical theory, critical literacy, and decolonial work, case study methodology was not enough to guide my inquiry. I drew on Carspecken (1996) for ideas on critical methodologies and on Patton's (2015) conceptualization of critical change research to add to my methodological framework. Carspecken (1996) calls critical methodologists "criticalist" (p.3) and defines us as researchers who are concerned with social inequities and who engage in work that will bring about positive social change. Criticalists also engage with social structures, power, and the agency of individuals, and we use our work to go beyond describing and into "refining" social theory (p.3). I consider myself a criticalist and define my work in relation to my two social worlds, Puerto Rico and Texas, and two distinct Latinx communities' experiences of social inequities, oppression, and colonial histories within these two contexts. My work is specifically concerned with how preservice teachers within these communities understand decolonial critical literacy theories and how these can become part of their literacy teaching in elementary classrooms. Carspecken (1996) offered me a five-stage

process (p.42-43) with which to organize my data collection and then make connections to larger societal systems. In stages one to three, the author suggests the researcher gather data as unobtrusively as possible, analyze data, and then engage in dialogic data generation with the participants. These stages are not relevant to my work. However, in stage four, the author offers a model to examine the data collected in the context of larger social sites and systemic relations. Here is where this methodologist guided me to connect data collected during synchronous classroom discussions, class activities, and interviews to larger systemic inequities such as "class, gender, race and political structures" (p.43). In stage five, which becomes a reiterative process, researchers are guided to connect and use these system relations to explain their findings and thus engage in social change. In Patton's (2015) conceptualization of critical change, he describes three interconnected elements of critical social research. First, research must inquire into situations of social injustice. For example, in my theoretical framework, I explained how my work is concerned with inequities in literacy teaching, as well as empowering both preservice teachers and elementary students to engage in making change. Second, in critical social research, the findings must be interpreted through a lense of critique as they are contextualized in broader sociopolitical contexts. In *Chapters 4* and *5*, I draw connections between the data and the historical, social, economic, and colonial contexts. Lastly, these findings and critiques must inform and result in change. While this work undoubtedly impacted the critical consciousness of the PTs and their understanding of decolonial and critical theories, much is left to do regarding how these types of pedagogies make it into elementary classrooms. Ultimately, this work examines the experiences, understandings, and application of decolonizing critical literacy work and has important implications for the fields of literacy teacher preparation and literacy education

in the early grades. Even though Carspecken (1996) and Patton's (2015) work in critical qualitative methodology supported part of my work, critical theory in itself is not enough to frame my research study across two settings that exist today within colonial structures (Wolf, 2006), and therefore I will now go into decolonial methods in education to support my work.

Decolonial Methods in Education. The field of decolonizing research methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) is vast and complex and my research project methods are not ones I would call decolonizing. I do, however, within the critical case study structures, adhere to some concepts of decolonizing methodologies that aid me in naming my place in the world and acknowledging truths that can be forgotten. I particularly draw from Zavala's (2016) work that focuses on educational contexts to frame my inquiry. First, I acknowledge that critical theory is not enough to explain the brutal history of colonization experienced by both Puerto Rico and the Mexican American community in the geopolitical border state of Texas, nor how we still exist today within these structural colonial models of oppression and suppression. Second, decolonizing methodologies allow me to reflect and acknowledge my position as an "outsider-within" (Zavala, 2016, p.2) or a scholar with privilege operating with an institution of power who is also, as an individual, a member of a "geographically marginalized community" (Zavala, 2016, p.2). This position, experienced by many scholar activists, needs to be acknowledged and constantly revisited. Third, decolonizing methodologies call for epistemological (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Zalava, 2016) and ontological (Kerr, 2014) diversity and for the "re-envisioning and development of knowledge and knowledge systems that have been silenced and colonized" (Zavala, 2016, p.2). Decolonizing methodologies are a space to recover these knowledges and generate ways of being and seeing the world that imagine a world beyond the one that operates within colonialism and

capitalism (e.g. Medina, in press). In *Chapter 2* of this dissertation, I discuss in detail how the strategies in education discussed by Zavala (2016), *counter/storytelling, healing and reclaiming*, guide and apply to my work.

Research Questions

In order to gain insight into the processes at play when we aim to prepare literacy preservice teachers for decolonial critical literacy practices, I hone in on two areas. First, I focus on the discourses that arose within the Zoom synchronous conversations. Second, I explore the value of the cross-context collaboration in itself, and the impact of all participants in the learning process. In both articles I pay close attention to the pedagogical implications for the broader field of literacy teacher preparation. The research questions addressed are:

1. What discourses emerge from the deliberate cross-context collaboration of preservice teachers while learning about critical literacies and anti-colonial frameworks?
2. How does a transnational collaboration, across teacher preparation programs in Texas and Puerto Rico, support preservice teachers' understandings and applications of anti-colonial theories and methods?

Context for Research

This study took place across contexts between the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) and the University of Puerto Rico in Bayamón (UPRB). Instructors in both teacher preparation programs collaborated using technology to connect groups of Latinx preservice teachers within two elementary literacy method courses. In this section, I describe both teacher

preparation programs, courses, and the instructors leading the courses. I also include a description of the participants and how I recruited them.

Bilingual Teacher Preparation Program at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin). The bilingual elementary teacher preparation program at UT Austin is aimed at preparing Spanish/English speaking bilingual teachers to serve the Texas and US Pre-Kinder to 6th grade bilingual population in all subjects. The program prides itself in preparing teachers with a strong sociocultural lens and teaching critical thinking about diverse linguistic practices, cultures, and society. In the four semester professional development sequence, the preservice teachers engage in a variety of foundational courses related to bilingual education, literacy, language, linguistics, and pedagogical practices, as well as methods courses in all subject areas (reading, writing, science, mathematics, and social studies). After the first semester of the sequence, the Foundations Semester, the preservice teachers also engage in field experiences visiting local public schools for a day and a half each week for their second and third semesters. During their last semester of the sequence, the preservice teachers complete their Student Teaching experience by observing, supporting, and teaching in a classroom five days a week for one semester. The program currently accepts students only in the Fall semester, and cohorts have ranged between five and twenty four students in the last two academic years. Most graduates of the program go on to teach in the local school district and other Texas districts; a few students leave the state or the country or work in careers outside of public K-12 education.

Bilingual Reading Methods Course. This study was bounded (Thomas, 2011) within one of the courses offered to the preservice teachers in their second semester of the four semester sequence. During this semester, the preservice teachers are addressed as Intern I's, as this was the

first time they go out to their field placements for one and a half days a week. Along with their field experience, the preservice teachers take five other methods and children development courses.

This research project took place within the Bilingual Reading Methods course. In this course, students learn prominent reading development theories in both Spanish and English, think about the act of teaching reading from a critical political stance, and engage in common pedagogical practices such as the read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, phonics development, etc. The course is also designed to include a practical field experience where the preservice teachers get to work with one or more elementary students between the grades PK-5 for a period between six and ten weeks, depending on the semester. Each week, for forty five minutes, the preservice teachers work with students in developing their literacy skills, a positive relationship to reading, and on a special project to be presented to the school community at the end of the project. With this purpose, a school partnership had been established with Travis Heights and their 4th grade bilingual teacher. In the Spring 2020 iteration of the course, the preservice teachers would have worked with the elementary students over a six week period. The instructor was planning to place special emphasis on decolonizing critical literacies as the preservice teachers work with their young learners in decolonial literacy projects. The PTs that were part of this study were not able to participate in this field component due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants in Texas. The Texas cohort that participated in this research study was composed of twenty four preservice teachers in their Intern I semester at UT Austin. Nineteen out of the twenty four preservice teachers consider themselves Mexican or Mexican-American; one

student self identifies as Colombian. Only Latinx preservice teachers in the cohort were invited to participate in the study due to the focus on the preparation of Latinx teachers for decolonizing critical literacies. It is important to note that I was this cohort's instructor for the Bilingual Foundations course in the Fall of 2019. This privileged position allowed me to hold conversations about bilingual education history and policy (e.g. Blanton, 2004; Crawford, 2004), as well as social issues such as race, language, and literacy ideologies (e.g. Cadiero Lopez, 2002; Crawford, 2004), notions of what it is to be American, and the conceptualization of teachers, and bilingual teachers in particular, as political agents within my class (e.g. Arce, 2004; Freire, 1970). These conversations and the personal relationships I got to build with the participants during the Fall of 2019 is relevant and added to this study's trustworthiness (discussed later in the *Ethical Considerations* section of this chapter).

Instructor at UT Austin and Researcher Positionality. I was both the instructor for the Bilingual Reading Methods course at UT Austin and the researcher in this study. This was the third time I taught this course, which meant I have had the opportunity to teach, reflect, and adapt the content of the course several times. Additionally, I piloted a research project on how preservice teachers engaged with their second graders in social action projects in the Fall 2017 iteration of the course. The pilot is described in more detail in the *Pilot Projects* section of this chapter. My role as a researcher was as a participant observer, as I facilitated the learning in the course, while also leading the study and gathering data from UPRB. I initially met the UPRB faculty member, Dr. Costa, participating in this study at a national literacy conference. We were introduced by one of my mentors, as we were both Puerto Rican scholars in the field of literacy

both interested in critical literacies. My dual role as a teacher educator at UT Austin and Puerto Rican, led me to propose the collaborative project to Dr. Costa.

My Puerto Rican identity is deeply intertwined with why I wanted to embark on this project. I received most of my education on the island, with few exceptions due to my father's career in the United States Army. My K-12th educational experiences along with my preparation on the island to become an English teacher were far removed from any ideas about critical pedagogy, critical literacy, or decolonial ideas. This worries me as a Puerto Rican scholar now aware of the colonial state of my country, particularly with the political turmoil and awakening of the Puerto Rican people in the recent months leading to the resignation of the former governor (Fernandez, 2019). This awakening is full of hope, as generations from all backgrounds engage in powerful actions that led to change. As teacher educators, this moment cannot be missed, but rather must be capitalized on as we explicitly prepare teachers for a different type of literacy education that centers on decolonial frameworks and position young children as active agents.

My professional identity as a literacy teacher educator first came to be in Austin, my second home. Here I became Latina for the first time, as labeled by others. My professional experiences and this new identity connected me to the Mexican American communities in Texas. Through my doctoral coursework, experience as a first grade teacher, my undergraduate students, and the larger local community, I have become aware of the continued injustices experienced by this ethnic group, such as racism and linguicism.Through this same process, I have become invested in the schooling experiences of Mexican American children here in Austin and committed to critical and decolonial preparation of bilingual teachers in this context. There is also complexity in my identity as a Puerto Rican teacher educator. My privileges as a lighter skin

Latina, speaker of the English language almost natively, and holder of a United States passport from birth also separate me from the experiences of my mostly Mexican American undergraduate students, families, and the children I serve. Furthermore, my decision to leave the island after my master's degree and six years of teaching experience to come to Austin, separate me from those surviving criminal, economic, political and natural disasters, as well as those fighting to keep Puerto Rico livable for generations to come. This identity as one of those *quienes se quitaron,* or those who gave up and left, complicates my feelings about working on the island. However, the learning opportunities offered to me as a doctoral student and my experiences in these academic spaces have helped me move away from this guilt and led me to connect my experience of crossing borders as one connected to broad systemic social inequities and to colonialism at its core. I approached this work aware of these intersecting and contradicting identities.

Recruitment at UT Austin. As the course instructor, I held power over the grading of the students in the class. Because of this, recruitment of participants was meant to occur at the end of the academic semester and to be administered by a colleague. All data was embedded in the course activities and was collected utilizing a variety of software, discussed in the *Technology* section of this chapter. Only data of those participants who consented to the research study was retrieved for analysis. Recruitment was to take place orally in May of the 2020 Spring semester of the course and was completed by a trusted and experienced doctoral colleague. She was to keep the consent forms and names of the students who consented confidential until I turned in all grades to the registrar at the end of the Spring 2020 semester. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was given access to the university's Docusign system and was able to recruit students digitally after I had turned in grades for the semester.

Elementary Teaching Preparation Program at the University of Puerto Rico in Bayamón (UPRB). The undergraduate pre-school/elementary teacher preparation program at UPRB was well underway in the late 90's when Dr. Costa joined the faculty at this university. The program prepares teachers for all subject areas in Pre-K, primary (K-3rd), and elementary school (4th-6th) as organized by Puerto Rico's Department of Education. Graduates from the program are able to apply for all three state teaching certifications, which makes the program a credit heavy one with students taking eighteen credits per semester to graduate in four years. The preservice teachers take a variety of pre-school and elementary school methods courses that require ten field hours per course. Additionally, they complete two seminar courses in which professors oversee thirty hours or more of field experiences per semester for both pre-school and elementary levels. These seminar experiences would be the parallel to UT Austin's internship experiences. The preservice teachers observe, support teachers, and design and implement lessons during these seminars. During the last semester of their undergraduate program, the preservice teachers complete a 300 hour, part-time student teaching experience at the school of their choice.

Upper Elementary Literacy Methods Course at UPRB. The literacy development course at UPRB where this research project lived is titled *Enseñanza de la lectoescritura en los grados 4to a 6to* or the Teaching of Literacy in Grades 4th to 6th. The course is preceded by the literacy development in the early grades course and focuses on the principles and methodologies that are fundamental in the teaching of reading and writing in upper elementary. In this course, students analyze and reflect about various educational theories and their application to literacy development. Additionally, they learn various methods and practices such as the reading and writing workshop, guided and shared reading, literature circles, and the development of cohesive

literacy units. Lastly, students develop and implement four lessons at a public elementary school of their choice. Again, the preservice teachers in Puerto Rico were not able to go into public school classrooms due to the pandemic.

Participants in Puerto Rico. The participants in Puerto Rico were a group of thirteen self identified Puerto Rican females. All of them speak Spanish as a first language and a few speak English as a second language.

Instructor at UPRB. Dr. Costa was the collaborating teacher educator and current professor for the Upper Elementary Literacy Development course at UPRB. She joined the University of Puerto Rico system in 1992 in the Río Piedras campus and transferred to the Bayamón campus in 1996. Although she holds a Bachelor's in theater, she discovered teaching by chance after graduation and taught several years in Puerto Rico and in Massachusetts while she completed her masters and doctoral degrees. Since her early years at UPRB, she has been teaching literacy related courses such as *La enseñanza de la lengua materna, Literatura infantil* and *El desarollo de la lectoescritura.* Dr. Costa shared with me through email communication that she has never considered herself a teacher per se because, to her, education had always been coercive and authoritarian. Instead, she used sociopolitical theater as a way to educate students by discovering Freire, Boal, and Celestin Freinet as her early influencers in the field of educational philosophy. To her, education, and literacy education specifically, has always been a way to create social change and to transform society into a more just one.

Recruitment at UPRB. Recruitment at UPRB was meant to be in person. I was planning to travel to Puerto Ricoin the Spring of 2020 to meet the preservice teachers, recruit participants orally, and gather written consent. I intended to explain to the students that all data was to be

embedded as part of course activities and no extra work would be required. The names of consenting participants would have been kept confidential from Dr. Costa until she submitted grades for her preservice teachers at the end of the academic semester. Due to the pandemic, recruitment occurred through Docusign. A recruitment protocol in Spanish was provided to the participants.

Pilot Projects

Their Words, Their Worlds: Critical Literacy in Bilingual Spaces. An initial pilot research study (Batista-Morales, Salmerón, & DeJulio, 2019) took place in the Fall of 2017 bounded by the Bilingual Reading Methods course I taught that semester. I collaborated with two other graduate students to understand how second graders and their partner teachers (preservice teachers in that cohort) took up social action projects during nine week critical literacy (e.g Lewison et al., 2002; Luke 2012; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019) tutorials. Although data were gathered focusing on the children and the preparation of the preservice teachers for critical literacy projects, only the data with a focus on the children has been analyzed for publication. In the findings, we shared how three children took up the task of taking social action by leading a community trash pick up involving the student, teacher, and mother and by authoring bilingual books for the second grade classroom that discussed critical topics. Additionally, we discussed how the children disrupted dominant stories about their bilingualism, their ability to critically read their worlds, what should count as literacy, and Latinx family involvement. One of the limitations of that study was how the instructors of the course (myself and the third author) fell short at providing students language to name and deconstruct the structural inequalities (Lewison et al., 2002) that drove their advocacy projects, which is an important aspect of critical literacies. This

pilot study informed my current study because it taught me what supports and guidance the preservice teachers need in getting ready to engage in the nine week critical literacy projects with their young students. Data regarding the preparation of preservice teachers to engage in the social action aspect of critical literacies is still under analysis.

"A Fresh New Lens": A Collaborative Critical Literacy Unit in a Dual Language Classroom. In the Fall of 2018, I led a second pilot study (Batista-Morales & Rojas Williams, in preparation for submission) looking at the ways a preservice teacher in her Student Teacher (ST) semester collaborated with her Cooperating Teacher (CT) and two university researchers (myself and a Social Studies doctoral student) to enact a critical literacy (e.g., Lewison et al., 2002; Luke 2012; Vasquez, Janks, & Comber, 2019) unit in a Dual Language (Valdez, 1997) 4th grade classroom. As part of the larger study, data were collected looking at the collaboration as well as the children's work products during the unit. The data analyzed up to date is focused specifically on understanding how the PT's and CT's ethnic/racial and professional identities impacted the pedagogical choices they made, along with two university researchers, in relation to the 4th grade critical literacy unit they planned and taught. We found that the CT's identities as a Latina classroom teacher who grew up bilingually along the US/Mexico border led her to choose topics that related to local, classroom issues and influenced the ways in which the children could learn to speak back to racial and linguistic injustices on a daily basis. On the other hand, we found that the PT's identities as a White, short-term student teacher who grew up with parents involved in community and social organizations more consistently centered topics related to global, social inequalities removed from the children's daily lives that focused on advocating for others. This study informed my dissertation work by highlighting the importance of teacher identity in

choosing the content of critical literacy units. Additionally, the PT and CT did an admirable job at providing students with the vocabulary and concepts to name and discuss social, racial, and economic inequalities, a limitation from my previous study. We are still in the process of analyzing data, taking a broader look at the classroom/university partnership as well as looking at the children's work.

UT Austin/UPRB Critical Reading Comprehension. A pilot study focusing on the collaboration between myself and Dr. Costa, as well as the collaboration between preservice teachers in both contexts, took place during the Fall of 2019. In this small study, we focused on the collaboration around teaching and assessment of critical reading comprehension with 1st and 2nd graders. This pilot study was aimed at testing the technology that would be used during the dissertation research study in the Spring of 2020, as well as to pilot the research questions and interview protocols. We found that preservice teachers resisted the use of Slack, an online chat platform, because it was one more application to keep track of. Instead, they preferred text, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger as communication tools. Additionally, since the collaboration was added after the syllabus had been discussed at the beginning of the semester, this experience felt like an added assignment and not as naturally embedded in the learning experiences the course would provide. These lessons were valuable in the planning of the Spring 2020 collaboration.

Data Sources

In order to address my research questions, I initially selected three types of data; personal, collaborative, and pedagogical. First, I collected autobiographical statements by the preservice teachers in order to understand how the contexts in which the preservice teacher grew up, learned,

and currently lives influenced their engagement with and growth as decolonizing critical literacy educators. I also collected one-on-one, semi-structured interviews at the end of the semester to learn how participating in course activities impacted this understanding (see *Appendix A)* . Secondly, I collected recordings of synchronous classroom discussions, recordings of small group discussions, collaborative class artifacts, and written responses in order to analyze specifically the critical discourses that emerged from the deliberate collaboration between preservice teachers across contexts when centering decolonizing critical literacy frameworks. Lastly, I intended to look at how preservice teachers took up the critical literacy and decolonial frameworks through their work with young children by analyzing both their lesson plans and the children's work. This portion of the data was not collected due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 1 provides an overview of the data sources and the gathering tools I used.

Data Sources						
Source	Auto-biographical Statements	One on one semi structured interviews	Recording of synchronous classroom discussions	Recording of small group discussions	Written Responses	Artifacts: Collaborative class artifacts
Gathering Tool	Canvas (UT Austin) Google Drive (UPRB)	Researcher, audio recorder	Zoom recordings and video recording	Researcher, Audio recorders	Canvas (UT Austin) Google Drive (UPRB) UT Box for secure storage	Canvas (UT Austin) Google Drive (UPRB) UT Box for secure storage

Table 1: Data Sources

Data Collection

This project was born out of the idea of engaging in a university wide initiative at UT Austin called the Global Classroom (https://global.utexas.edu/special-projects/global-classroom). In this program, faculty members from across the globe collaborate and co-teach through the use of technology to enrich university student's learning experiences. Since only faculty members can apply for the funding provided by this program, I enacted the collaborative aspect of it individually but with the support and guidance of the Global Classroom office. This initiative, as well as our shared interest and commitment to the preparation of preservice teachers for decolonizing critical literacy practices, brought Dr. Costa and I together in this project.

The project consisted of first collaborating with her on the preparation of both courses, in order to plan a series of experiences for the preservice teachers that allowed them to learn about, reflect on, and enact decolonizing critical literacy practices. As instructors, we initially decided on three class days in which to hold synchronous classroom discussions, the topics for these, the academic texts, and the discussion questions that would guide the conversations (see *Table 3: Topics of synchronous classroom discussions*). These discussions served the purpose of probing the preservice teachers to reflect on their past backgrounds and contexts, the current social and political moment, and their identities, and how these relate to learning how to enact decolonizing critical literacy practices. After the first synchronous collaborative session, Dr. Costa and I decided to add a fourth session focused on practical implications. In this session, the preservice teachers were able to take the theoretical concepts explored and integrate them in their literacy lesson design. The whole group discussions lasted between fifteen and forty minutes in length.

As part of the collaboration, preservice teachers connected with each other in what we called virtual groups of four to five students across both contexts. To initiate contact, Dr. Costa and I invited them to engage in a short semi-structured initial conversation where they got to know each other as people and literacy educators across each other's geopolitical contexts. Preservice teachers also collaborated through text or other technology mediums throughout the semester, as they worked on collaborative assignments while bridging theory and practice.

In each of the courses, the preservice teachers were to work with an elementary school age child in the field. During this work, the preservice teachers would have engaged in developing literacy practices with the child that focused on topics of *counter/storytelling, healing and reclaiming,* which are decolonial strategies in education (Zavala, 2016). Unfortunately, that aspect of this dissertation project did not take place due to COVID-19.

Research Questions	Data Source	Frequency	Method of Analysis
(1) What discourses emerge from the deliberate cross-context collaboration of preservice teachers while learning about critical literacies and anti-colonial frameworks?	Autobiographical statements	*UT Austin* 1 statement per teacher Total: 20 *UPRB* 1 statement per teacher Total: 13	Thematic coding.
	Recordings of synchronous classroom discussions	4 across the academic semester Varying duration	Discourse analysis.
(2) How does a transnational collaboration, across teacher preparation programs in Texas and Puerto Rico, support preservice teachers' understandings and applications of anti-colonial theories and methods?	Recordings of classroom discussions	4 across the academic semester Varying duration	Discourse analysis and thematic coding.
	Recording of small group discussions	15 across the academic semester Varying duration	Discourse analysis and thematic coding.
	Collaborative class artifacts	3 times across the academic semester 3 per each virtual group, 7 virtual groups Total: 21	Thematic coding.

Table 2: Data Matrix

Autobiographical Statements and End of Semester Interviews. I invited the participating preservice teachers of both cohorts to complete an autobiographical statement with the purpose of understanding how their past and present contexts, backgrounds, identities, and educational experiences impact their growth as critical literacy educators. Within this assignment, I focused on the teachers' personal stories, the contexts in which they grew up and learned during early ages and the identities they chose to take on. I also explored their initial views on critical literacy practices and what young children are able to do. Lastly, I explored how the present social and political moments impact the ways they take up these frameworks and thought about them as people and educators. My rationale for utilizing autobiographical statements versus one-on-one, beginning of semester interviews stemmed from my positionality as one of the course instructors and my inability to conduct pre-interviews with my cohort. These autobiographical statements were embedded in both classes' coursework and were only retrieved once I have gained participant consent. These were turned in using Canvas and Google Drive and were analyzed using multiple cycle thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016). At the end of the semester, I planned to conduct one-on-one, semi structured interviews focused on the educational practices the teachers engaged in the courses, their collaboration with preservice teachers in other contexts, and their work with elementary school children. I was also to collect data about their views on decolonizing critical literacy practices and the children's agency in the post interviews. Due to the pandemic, the number of participants that agreed to an interview was limited to nine and the protocol was adapted (see Appendix A). All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using multiple cycle thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016).

Audio of Classroom Discussions. Both cohorts of preservice teachers engaged in synchronous classroom discussions four times during the semester. First, I was trying to understand how preservice teachers in both Texas and Puerto Rico saw themselves in their colonized worlds, if they were aware of colonization, and how they connect day to day inequities to systemic oppression and colonial structures. Second, I was trying to understand how they take on decolonizing critical literacy frameworks and educational practices under this framework in relation to their past and present contexts, backgrounds, and identities. Third, these classroom discussions were analyzed with the purpose of understanding what critical discourses emerge from the collaboration between preservice teachers across contexts and what was to be gained from the deliberate crossing of borders when learning about decolonizing critical literacy frameworks. These synchronous classroom discussions were recorded using Zoom Communications Software and were transcribed by myself and a paid undergraduate student. Below (*Table 3*) is a table detailing the topics of each discussion, the academic text that both cohorts read, and the discussion questions and activities planned by both teacher educators purposefully.

Topic	Readings	Discussion Questions	Date
The Teaching of Literacy as a Political Act	Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1987). La importancia del acto de leer. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.	Opening questions in small groups: *¿Cómo relacionas las lecturas con tu historia, tu contexto y tu práctica como maestrx?* Whole group sharing/students take notes. Small virtual group work: Compare and contrast between contexts.	01/28/20

Table 3: Topics of Synchronous Classroom Discussions

		Create a venn diagram to compare and contrast the contexts in groups using Google Draw. *"En este diagrama de Venn, compara y contrasta lo aprendido de lxs candidxs a maestrxs del otro contexto."* Whole group discussion. Quick write: *¿Qué aprendí de discutir esta lectura y colaborar con mis compañeros del otro contexto?*	
Critical Literacy	Vasquez, V. M., Janks, H., & Comber, B. (2019). Critical Literacy as a Way of Being and Doing. *Language Arts, 96*(5), 300-311.	Whole group opening discussion: *¿Cómo impactó esta lectura tú visión sobre la enseñanza de la literacidad? ¿Que ideas centrales te llamaron la atención o atrayeron?* *¿Qué conexiones puedes hacer entre la lectura y tu contexto histórico, político y social?* Small virtual group work: *Pensando en los salones de clases que has visitado en tu contexto (Texas y Puerto Rico), aplica los principios discutidos en la lectura en tu planificación de un mini plan de lección de literacidad crítica de manera grupal.* *Inicio:* *¿Cómo comenzarían la unidad, cómo centrarías las voces de los estudiantes? ¿Cómo escogerías el tema?* *Conexión a lo aprendido:* *¿De los "Key Aspects" que comparten*	02/04/20

		las autoras del artículo (p.306-307), qué principios están incluyendo o aplicando en tu planificación? *Desarollo:* *¿Qué tipo de textos escogerían?* *¿Qué tipo de actividades harían? (20 minutos)* *Final:* *¿Cómo evaluarían la lección?* Whole group discussion. Quick write: *¿Qué aprendí de discutir esta lectura y planificar una lección con mis compañeros del otro contexto?*	
Decolonial Methodologies in Education	Zavala, M. (2016). Decolonial methodologies in education. *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory.* "Oiga profe" video	Whole group opening discussion: *¿Cual es tu visión sobre la educación decolonial?* *¿Si hubieses sido expuestx a estos principios o conocimiento durante tu educación escolar, cómo te hubiese impactado?* *¿Es pertinente a tu contexto?* Small virtual group work: *Escoge:* *¿Cuales de esas categorías descritas en el artículo de Zavala (Counter Storytelling/Healing/Reclaiming) tu utilizarias en el salón de lectura?* *Crea:*	02/11/20

Table 3: Topics of Synchronous Classroom Discussions

		Crea una red de ideas en colaboración con tu grupo (en línea) de que actividades imaginas que puedes hacer en el salón de clases con tus estudiantes como parte de tu clase de lectura. Whole group discussion. Quick write: *¿Qué aprendí de discutir esta lectura y colaborar con mis compañeros del otro contexto?*	
Practical Applications	None.	Whole group lecture by teacher educators reviewing all theories and modeling the development of literacy instructional activities.	03/10

Table 3: Topics of Synchronous Classroom Discussions

Written Responses. At the end of each collaborative session, I asked preservice teachers in both contexts to respond in writing to the prompt "What did I learn after discussing this reading and collaborating with my peers from the other context?" This data source provided me with an understanding of what was to be gained from the deliberate crossing of borders during the collaboration, as well as the possible challenges that might arise. These responses were analyzed using multiple cycle thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016).

Artifacts. As the preservice teachers collaborated in their virtual collaborative groups during each of the four online collaborations, they co-created four products in the form of Google Docs or Google Draw. The first one, focused on critical pedagogy, was a Venn Diagram that compared and contrasted how the preservice teachers in both contexts related that week's reading to their histories, contexts, and teaching practices. During week two of the collaboration, teachers

created a lesson plan that centered critical literacy. Third, preservice teachers collaboratively created a web of ideas discussing how they would apply one of the three decolonial methods in education discussed by Zavala (2016). Lastly, the preservice teachers were given a topic (*identidad de género, justicia ambiental, el miedo, control de armas, gentrificación, racismo*) and asked to design literacy activities around that theme. During the second half of the courses, the preservice teachers would have continued to learn together in the online space, collaborate in their small groups, and grow as decolonizing critical literacy educators as they applied this learning in educational contexts. Preservice teachers in both contexts would have worked with elementary school children on literacy development through the implementation of a decolonizing critical literacy unit. For six weeks (five lesson plans) the preservice teachers would have planned for units that centered *counter storytelling, healing or reclaiming* (Zavala, 2016) along with their elementary school students. Both the preservice teacher and the children would have learned about, reflected, and enacted actions along the decolonial framework in both contexts. The preservice teacher's collaborative artifacts, lesson plans, and the children's artifacts would have been collected through Canvas (UT Austin) and Google Drive (UPRB) and would have been analyzed through multiple cycle thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016). The lesson plans and children's artifacts were not collected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Analysis Methods

Due to the nature of the study and my positionality as one of the two course instructors, my data analysis process was not iterative and recursive as suggested by qualitative methodologists (Huberman, Miles & Saldaña, 2014). Instead, all data analysis took place after both Dr. Costa and I had turned in grades for the Spring 2020 semester. To begin this process, I

categorized my data sources into three categories in order to provide some organization. These categories were collaborative, personal, and pedagogical. The categories were fluid, and some sources fall into two categories, but overall they are merely meant as a way of organizing the process. I first analyzed collaborative data, listening to the synchronous classroom discussions, creating preliminary jottings (Saldaña, 2016, p.21) and analytic memos (p.44) while I listened the first time, and then transcribed the whole group conversations only. I completed most of these transcriptions myself as they occurred in Spanish as well as a mix of Spanish and English, and listening closely to the data from the beginning ensured more familiarity. During this time, I also analyzed the transcripts of the small group conversations between preservice teachers as they worked on their collaborative assignments and artifacts using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and creating analytic memos (Saldaña, 2016).

Next, I analyzed the autobiographical statements and end of semester, one-on-one, semistructured interviews using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) searching for themes and patterns across the cohorts. I also looked for changes across time in participant's responses regarding how the courses content, synchronous discussions, and collaborations influenced their growth both as people and as decolonizing critical literacy educators. After each round of analysis I wrote analytic memos (Saldaña, 2016) with regard to each distinct purpose. These data sources were not included in the two publishable articles presented in *Chapters 4* and *5* of this dissertation.

After the first round of analysis for each data source described above, I engaged in a second cycle theoretical coding (Saldaña, 2016, p.250). During this process, I focused on utilizing my theoretical framework as my analytic focus, collapsing and discarding codes. This analysis of

conversations allowed me to go beyond thematic coding and led me to make connections between the preservice teachers' talk and issues of power, social inequalities, colonialism, race, language, etc. Lastly, I engaged in crystallization (Richardson, 2000) of the findings (see *Ethical Consideration* section for more detail), comparing across sources, methods, and theoretical frameworks in order to gain a more in depth and complex understanding of the findings, while being open to findings beyond the limitations of triangulation (Denzin, 1970).

Technology

Technology was a critical piece of the collaboration across contexts. With the support of the Office of Instructional Innovation at UT Austin, I identified the software that was useful for data collection. I used Zoom Communications Software to conduct the four synchronous, whole group discussions among the two cohorts. The software allowed me to record the oral discussions and store for future analysis. The Office of Instructional Innovation agreed to provide me with a *Pro* account for the Spring 2020 semester which allowed me to hold conversations over the 45 minute limit on regular accounts. These conversations were also videotaped using an external camcorder, as a means of backup, which was helpful since there was some feedback in sections of the Zoom audio recording. Additionally, students used texting, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger to collaborate through written text and through video calls in their virtual groups. Preservice teachers also participated in a private Facebook group where they responded to prompts and shared photos of their diverse contexts (https://www.facebook.com/groups/111441296940601). Lastly, all written products, reflections, and artifacts of the work produced in collaboration were stored in a secure, password encoded UT Box.

Ethical Considerations and Reciprocity

Since the 1980's, qualitative researchers have been engaged in conversation about what makes good, credible, and worthwhile qualitative work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracey, 2010). I use some aspects of Tracey's guide (2010) for "excellent qualitative research" to address ethical considerations and ensure the quality of my work. First, the author discusses the *worthiness of the topic*. My work in decolonizing critical literacy teacher preparation is relevant to the field of literacy teacher preparation and timely due to the political climate both in Texas and Puerto Rico (see *Chapter 2* for a clear conception of the gap in the literature). Second, I conducted my research study with *rich rigor,* gathering sufficient data from a variety of sources over time, from contexts that are significant to my inquiry, and using appropriate procedures. Third, I strived for the uttermost *sincerity* in my work, being transparent of my positionality and biases throughout the data collection and analysis processes and taking into consideration self-reflexivity and emotion, often forgotten aspects of research. Next, I ensured *credibility* through the use of thick descriptions of the synchronous class discussions, showing the preservice teachers words rather than telling, and using the crystallization of sources. "Crystallization encourages researchers to gather multiple types of data and employ various methods, multiple researchers, and numerous theoretical frameworks" (p. 844). Crystallization is different than triangulation as it "transcends the rigid, fixed two-dimensional triangle" (Richardson, 2000, p.934) and allows for an infinite amount of outcomes, taking into consideration sources, methods, the researcher, frameworks, and the specific time and context in which the study takes place. Next, I considered *resonance* and the ways I was able to affect my audience. Through the authoring this two article dissertation, I will be sharing my work in the form of academic articles to both the educational researcher and practitioner communities. Additionally, I commit to sharing aspects of my work in journals

aimed at practicing teachers and teacher educators, searching for transferability as others in a similar position as me seek to engage in similar work. Following this line, Tracey (2010) helped me think about theoretical and practical *significance.* Not only does my work engage with theoretical frameworks that push the field of literacy teacher preparation in new directions, but it has practical considerations for teacher educators and teachers in the field wishing to engage in decolonizing critical literacy practices with young children.

Ethical considerations are critical in qualitative research with human subjects, particularly of historically oppressed minorities. First, there were *procedural ethics,* and in this regard I have applied to and obtained approval from UT Austin's Institutional Review Board. Next, I ensured procedural ethics by cross-checking my sources with participants and confirming patterns and discourses that arose during the data analysis phase. Next, I ensured *situational ethics,* reflecting often about the specific context of my study, especially allowing preservice teachers to refrain from engaging in conversations that might be too sensitive in connection to their personal experiences while engaging in conversations about critical topics. Last, I safeguarded *relational ethics* by centering mutual respect in my classroom, being transparent about my dissertation and the future recruitment process, and by offering preservice teacher support beyond my class and data collection, something I have been able to do with past cohorts of preservice teachers. Related to relation ethics, Patton's (2015) conception of the *reciprocity premise* (p.691) pushed me to think about the ways in which those who are the focus of inquiry can benefit from the work as well. Even though the way the research project is conceptualized did not allow for preservice teachers to work side by side with me as researchers, the knowledge gained throughout the course will hopefully benefit them in their teaching practice as they engage in bridging state standards

with decolonial critical literacy practices in their field experience. Additionally, once I submitted my cohort's course grades and could recruit participants, I invited the Texas preservice teachers interested in pursuing graduate school to participate in my university's pre-graduate school mentoring program and, in this way, participate in the learning of research methods and analysis.

Constraints of Case Study Research

Inherent to this study is the limitation of continuing to apply a Western modernist view on the production of knowledge, even when utilizing critical and decolonial frameworks (Santos, 2009). The confines of academic research and the dissertation genre created a push and pull as I extended my work within the space I operate in. While this limited the data collection methods I utilized and the ways in which I analyzed my data, the act of acknowledgement pushed my reflective process as I aimed to understand my positionality as outsider-within, a scholar in a privileged space who is also a member of a marginalized and colonize community (Zavala, 2016).

Furthermore, the specific case study methodology (Thomas, 2011) has several limitations I kept in mind and addressed. First, case studies are not meant to be generalizable, so the findings of this study extend our thinking of theory, but not to other university collaborations, etc. Additionally, due to the in-depth and socio-political nature of the critical case study methodology, it was required for participants to engage in conversations and reflections regarding sensitive topics in relation to their personal histories. Engaging in this type of research put strains on participants and researcher/participants relationships. These constraints were discussed ahead of time by the course instructors and explained thoroughly during participant recruitment. Lastly, some have discussed the limitations of coding as an analytic process (Saldaña, 2016). As any other analytical method, it has the potential to be reductionist and mechanistic. Moreover, the

codes generated were limited by my life experiences and worldview as the analyst, and might not have captured important pieces of information. Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic limited my study in several ways as I have mentioned throughout this chapter. I was not able to complete my data collection as the preservice teachers did not go into elementary classrooms. More importantly, the pandemic and its challenges impacted the mental health and wellbeing of all of us involved in this study, rendering different outcomes than those set out when I proposed this study in 2019.

Chapter 4: Creating Border Crossing Spaces for Anti-Colonial Critical Literacy Encounters in Teacher Preparation

While the movement for social, racial and economic justice is not a recent event in the United States, there is no doubt that 2020 brought a new wave of awareness, uprisings, and a push for social reform. The unveiling of social and racial injustice by the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on Communities of Color, followed by the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd, as well as the uprising of the Black community and its allies has led to a refocusing on these critical issues in the US. As a Puerto Rican woman, scholar, and teacher educator, I am also committed to addressing the socio-political & environmental turmoil back in the Island that included hurricane María in 2017, massive protests resulting in the resignation of former governor Ricky Rosello in 2019, and a series of earthquakes in early 2020. Teaching for social, racial, economic, environmental and anti-colonial justice, and preparing teachers for this endeavour, must continue to be at the forefront for teacher educators and educational researchers. The study described in this paper was underway as these events unfolded in the Spring of 2020.

In this critical case study, I sought to understand how collaboration across teacher preparation programs located in Texas (TX) and Puerto Rico (PR), two areas of the US with histories of colonization and oppression of Latinx people, supported the development of literacy teachers for these transformative practices, and anti-colonial and critical literacy practices in particular. Preservice teachers across Puerto Rico and central Texas engaged in a series of planned collaborative experiences such as synchronous Zoom lessons, small group work, and planning for teaching. These Zoom discussions pushed the preservice teachers to reflect on their past backgrounds and contexts, the current social and political moment, their identities and how these relate to learning how to enact anti-colonial critical literacy practices. Grounded in theories of

critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and decoloniality, this work cannot be taken up without centering context, both geographical and socio-political.

Puerto Rico's socio economic and political debacles have been in the making for centuries due to the colonial structures ruling our political and economic systems (Bonilla & Lebrón, 2019), however a growing sense of urgency has come to life over the last two to three years. Undoubtedly, Hurricanes Irma and María were visible humanitarian crises that brought attention to the poor local and federal responses that led to the death of 2,975 Puerto Ricans. However, the financial crises resulting in an unpayable debt of 72 billion dollars, the highest unemployment rates in the US, and the forced establishment of the Fiscal Control Board (under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act passed by Congress) were all brewing right before these natural disasters adding to the crisis. More recently, a series of earthquakes (Rice, 2020) struck the south of the island leaving over 2,000 people in temporary shelters and many more sleeping in tents out of fear of future shakes. These events were a reminder of the 2017 collective trauma, leaving families in the dark once more and thousands of Puerto Ricans waiting on delayed aid from the federal government (Lin, 2020). These natural and human disasters have been met with agency and activism from Puerto Rican communities and allies from grassroot movements, community kitchens, artistic movements, advancements in renewable energy sources for the island (Bonilla & Lebrón, 2019) and a series of massive protests in *el verano del* 2019 leading to the resignation of former governor Ricardo Rosello (Mazzei & Robles, 2019).

Back in the US and in the local context of our Mexican American communities in Texas, the last few years have not been any more harmonious. The 2016 election of Donald Trump and implementation of migration policies have left this community living in fear and pain. The local

2017-2019 ICE Raids (Statesman, 2017, 2018) traumatized this community, separated families and left children in limbo as supermarkets, schools, and places of employment were viciously targeted by ICE officials. At the border, the discourse around the building of a 13 mile long wall along the Rio Grande Valley (Rodgers & Bailey, 2019) serves as a continued reminder of the US government's attack on the Mexican American community in Texas. These attacks have materialized as the death of over twenty migrants under ICE custody in detention centers, including five children, due to inhumane treatment, lack of medical oversight, and neglect (Rappleye & Riordan Seville, 2019). As in Puerto Rico, these events have been met with groups organizing in protest and resistance by the local communities (Aguilar, 2017) and in alliances with other immigrant communities such as through the No Ban, No Wall 2017 rally at the Texas capitol.

These socio-political and economic events cannot be ignored in K-12 classrooms, as they are an integral part of our children's daily and collective lives, fears, and experiences. Consequently, teacher preparation programs have an immense responsibility in preparing teachers for the challenging task of a critical, liberating educational experience for these communities who have been historically oppressed. For our Latinx teachers, in both the Puerto Rico and Texas contexts, this process is complicated by the own teacher's experiences in these oppressive contexts and the fact that their educational experiences often lack these critical practices (Flores, 2017). While taking the current socio-political context impacting schooling and education into account is crucial, I argue it is not enough if teachers and students do not extend this work into making connections to structures in place that enable them and to the colonial and imperial histories that gave birth to these systems. Within this context, I ask, *What discourses emerge from*

the deliberate cross-context collaboration of preservice teachers while learning about critical literacies and anti-colonial frameworks?

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Pedagogy in Bilingual Education Contexts

At the heart of critical pedagogy is the realization that education is a political act and educators are political actors either upholding or disrupting the social systems of schools and society (Freire 1970/2018; 1993; Darder, 2015). Through what Freire called a banking model of education, teachers who uphold the status quo, focus on depositing a pre-selected curriculum into the "blank" students' brains in favor of society's social and economic needs. In contrast, Freire proposed and practiced a problem-posing education model. In this model, teachers and students bring the social world they are part of into the classroom, deconstruct ideologies inherent in these worlds, and become aware of oppressor/oppressed dichotomies. Freire and other critical pedagogues (Darder, 2012; hooks, 2003), leave us with the hope that achieving critical consciousness and engaging in praxis (critical reflection and taking action) can lead to the self liberation of those oppressed in schools and in the larger society.

As foundational as it is, Freire's work is not without critique (hooks, 1994). As a white, Brazilian male, Freire failed to address the intersectionality of gender, race, and linguistic identity in his work. Darder (2012) argues that critical pedagogy, along with political theory and cultural democracy, can provide a framework for a liberating educational experience for Latinx, Black, Asian, Native American, Muslim, and other minoritized students. Darder (2012) calls for educational experiences in which these students can explore and understand how the dominant culture and language affects them and their communities. This is a pedagogy which helps students

develop critical awareness and the "courage to question the structures of domination" (p.101) that affect their lives.

In the context of teacher education, Bartolomé (2004) skillfully outlines how critical pedagogy must have a central space in teacher education programs for social change to occur. Drawing on Darder, Torres and Baltodano's (2002) work, she describes critical pedagogy as "primarily concerned with the kinds of educational theories and practices that encourage both students and teachers to develop an understanding of the interconnecting relationship among ideology, power and culture" (p. 3). She discusses the significance of "infusing" (Bartolomé, 2004, p.98) teacher education programs with the principles and ideas of critical pedagogy as a way of preparing teachers who can name and interrogate unfair ideologies and practices in education settings and how these relate to power. This process must also include the development of "political clarity" in preservice teachers (Bartolomé, 2000). This means that preservice teachers engage in a process of "ever-deepening consciousness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape their lives, their capacity to transform such conditions...and the possible linkages between macro-level political, economic and social variables and subordinated groups' academic performance in the micro-level classroom (Bartolomé, 2004, p.98).

Critical Literacy

With roots in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2018), critical literacy seeks for children to become readers of not only words, but of their worlds, often interrogating power relations and inequities within literacy classrooms and society at large. As a framework, critical literacy (Luke 2012; Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys, 2002) enables educators to provide students with a transformative literacy experience that addresses issues of culture, politics, and power. Luke

(2012) defines the term critical literacy as using print and other media of communication "to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems and practices governing the social fields of everyday life" (p. 5).

In a recent conceptualization of the term, Vazquez, Hanks & Comber (2019) see critical literacy as a frame for all classroom teaching and learning and not just limited to literacy. They describe it as a process in which teachers and students constantly read their socially constructed worlds critically and engage in transformative action in each particular context across the globe. While the authors include theoretical perspectives that have influenced critical theory (e.g. feminist theory, critical race theory, critical media literacy, etc.) they see critical literacy as a "way of being...constructed organically using inquiry questions of learners... and defined by individuals in their own contexts" (p.302). While the authors of this article highlight the importance of differences in context when engaging in critical literacy work, they provide ten useful tenets that help frame my work. In relation to students, the authors propose teaching in a way that views critical literacy as an everyday lens, rather than a topic or unit to be covered, centering the valuable cultural and linguistic resources that diverse students bring into the classroom, and teaching from topics, issues, or questions that are central to student's lives. In relation to literacy, they consider how written and illustrated texts such as books and maps are never written in neutral ways and how readers do not read these texts in neutral ways either. Furthermore, this view of literacy includes reading the world as a text that has been socially constructed and critically "making sense of the sociopolitical systems through which we live our lives and questioning these systems [focusing] on social issues, including inequalities of race, class, gender, or disability…" (p. 307). Finally, they conceptualize critical literacy as a transformative process

that can alter inequitable social practices and bring change through the redesign and production of texts, images, and practices that bring forth social justice in their worlds.

While critical theories, and critical literacy specifically, support my work by naming the socially oppressive structures we operate within, including schooling, teacher preparation programs, and literacy classrooms, they are not enough to frame contexts operating within colonial histories and structures. Since the field of decolonial theories and decolonial practices in education has been underexplored, little is known about the preparation of literacy preservice teachers for this task. I draw on decolonial theory (Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007) and on Zavala's (2016) conceptualization of decolonial methodologies in education to extend the field of critical literacy teacher preparation and literacy teaching across contexts.

Decolonial Theory and Anti-Coloniality

Decolonial theory is concerned with naming our human and social state as a product of the colonial project and with recognizing the present colonial structures that reign our everyday life. This goes beyond the social and economic inequalities named and criticized in critical social theory, and names colonialism as the inception of these inequalities. Because decolonial theory at its core "brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life," it is not a metaphor that should be utilized interchangeably with critical social justice frameworks (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Although I review here what others call decolonial theory and methods in education, in my own project I use the term anticolonial as a way of distinguishing decolonial projects that are Indigenous land repatriation from anticolonial educational projects (Cervantes-Soon, 2018).

According to Mignolo (2011a) the term decoloniality came to be in the 1950's when Asian and African countries, and later Latin American ones, came together to design a "third-way"(p.2)

beyond capitalism or communism, the two prevailing Western narratives. Today, decoloniality is concerned with global and economic justice, while displacing socialism and democracy as the only two options to guide our thinking and doing. Mignolo (2011) calls this idea of not accepting the options presented to us as "delinking" (p.5). Important to the Puerto Rican context, Quijano's (2007) work is framed from the Latin American perspective. He centers race as the most important element of social organization established by colonizers. One of Quijanos main points is that modern capitalism cannot be understood fully without understanding colonialism and colonial racial and labor market structures. This is impactful to education; Western Europe positioning of itself as a world economic power also meant that Europeans held power in determining and controlling valued forms of "subjectivity, culture, knowledge and the production of knowledge" (p.189). This had material implications around the world, and Latin America specifically, as the colonizers suppressed Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing and forced assimilation into European culture.

Quijano (2007) calls this the "colonization of cognitive perspectives" (p.189) which naturally has had implications to what we teach and how we teach literacy today. This Western modernist view of knowledge centers European knowledge as obvious, universal, sent from god and as no longer a mere point of view. Quijano posits that this view on European knowledge not only supports colonialism, but was a "foundational part of the power structure of domination" (Quijano, 2007, p.174). This view of knowledge also permeates the educational practices and literacy practices we see as neutral and natural. At the same time, it leaves little or no space for what Mignolo (2000) calls "the enunciation and expression of non-Western cosmologies and for the expression of different cultural, political and social memories" (in Zavala, 2016, p.1) specific

to our contexts within teaching and learning. It is important to note that I draw on theories emerging from the Latin American experience based on the context of my study, but there are many other important North American/Native American perspectives on decolonial theory (e.g. Smith, 2013).

In this article, I primarily draw on Zavala's (2016) conceptualization of decolonial methodologies in education. I bridge his framework with critical literacy theory to delineate a framework that informs my research, instruction, and the development of possible decolonial literacy practices offered to preservice teachers as they work with elementary school children in two different contexts.

Decolonial Theory in Education

Zavala (2016) suggests a series of methods that can be applied in different educational contexts, both formal and informal. He uses the term educational contexts in a very specific way, referring to education as "a site of struggle and rupture" (p. 1) where people come together in dialogue to discuss and respond to colonialism. My work opens this space of dialogue across the Texas and Puerto Rico contexts and asks preservice teachers to reflect on socio-historical and contemporary contexts while applying these methods and strategies in their literacy teaching. In this research project, I invited preservice teachers to reclaim knowledges from their own pasts while opening spaces for children to do the same and to generate knowledge and ways of doing literacy that are relevant to their socio-cultural and political contexts today. Zavala's (2016) work offers three methodologies or strategies: *counter/storytelling, healing* and *reclaiming.* He explains that these are not linear ideas but rather interlocking, as he shows in the diagram provided here.

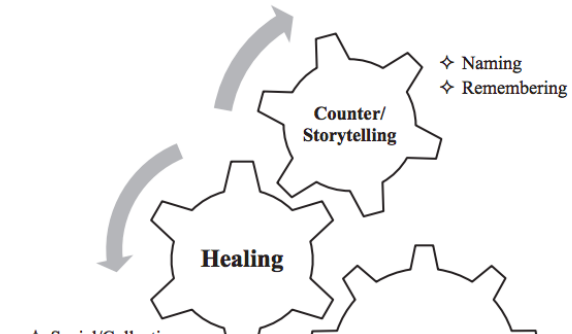

Figure 2: Decolonial Methodologies/Strategies in Education (Zavala, 2016, p. 3)

Counter/Storytelling emerges from the critical literacy (Freire, 1970) tradition of dialogue and reflection. It centers on providing people with a language of critique that goes beyond naming and critiquing oppressive social structures that are inequitable to members of society based on their class, race, gender, abilities, etc. Instead, it focuses on people naming their social worlds as encircled by colonialism and its structural arrangements and on developing a language of critique for this state. *Healing* is central in the process of recovering from this brutal process and healing from collective trauma because the process of colonization takes away who we are in relation to ourselves, each other, our communities, our land, and our knowledges. It can take place individually or in community through dialogue and action. Unlike naming and remembering, which can be considered cognitive or intellectual processes according to Zavala (2016), healing is often seen as having no space in educational projects. Consequently, the very concept of healing through education challenges Western conceptions of education and research in educational spaces. Lastly, the concept of *reclaiming* is closely related to praxis in Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970) or taking transformative action within Critical Literacy (Vazquez, Hanks & Comber, 2019).

It is the process of reclaiming who we are as peoples: our identities, histories, practices, and our relationship to land and place. This includes ancestral, Indigenous knowledges, but also local knowledges and ways of doing teaching and learning.

Review of the Literature

Teacher Preparation for Transformative Literacy Practices

Although scholars have been concerned with providing all students with relevant and just educational experiences for many years now (Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Nieto, 1991), the preparation of literacy teachers for this task is a more recent endeavour. In 2000, in a themed issue of the Journal of Literacy Research, Xu (2000) made a call for the integration of multicultural issues in literacy methods courses across the country. Since then, the field has been more concerned (Wetzel, et. al., 2019) with the preparation of literacy teachers to meet these needs in more just ways for our ever diversifying student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These efforts have included preparing teachers for cultural diversity (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 2000; Simon, 2015), for gender and sexuality diversity (e.g. Staley & Leonardi, 2016), for the inclusion of racial literacies (e.g. Skerrett, Pruitt, & Warrington, 2015; Souto-Manning & Price Dennis, 2012), and for bilingual classrooms (e.g. Fránquiz, Salazar, & DeNicolo, 2011; Joseph & Evans, 2018) among other areas. Critical literacy teacher preparation, specifically for Latinx teachers, and how they take on anti-colonial methods in their teaching, is an underexplored area that I argue should be the future of our literacy teacher preparation programs.

Preparation of Teachers for Critical Literacy

Preparing teachers for critical literacy teaching is of crucial importance in a time of such political, social, racial, and economic turmoil in the United States and across the world (Hendrix-Soto & Wetzel, 2018; Janks, 2012). Yet, few studies in the field of literacy teacher preparation focus specifically on preparing teachers with this theoretical framework in mind. In a review of the literature of almost 30 years, Hendrix-Soto and Wetzel (2019) could only locate 26 articles that explicitly mentioned the preparation of teachers for critical literacy. Notably the majority of these (20) focused on text based approaches for teaching critical literacy through children's literature and academic texts. In only 5 were the preservice teachers guided to engage in critical literacy practices themselves through inquiry, research, critical conversations, and/or autobiographical work. In a broader review of the literature that included over 100 articles focused on the preparation of teachers for sociocultural knowledges and understandings (Wetzel, et al., 2019), few articles focused on the preparation of teachers for critical literacy practices (Dávila, 2011; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Lohfink, 2014; Saunders, 2012), and only eight of these occurred in or were attached to a field experience.

Researchers have looked at the preparation of teachers for critical literacies across grade levels (Norris, Lucas & Prudhoe, 2012; Skerrett, 2010). In the pre-school setting, Norris, Lucas, and Prudhoe (2012) worked with 27 white preservice teachers enrolled in their "Diversity Perspectives in Early Childhood Education" course. After the teacher educators modeled reading texts critically lifting hidden messages, the preservice teachers were asked to analyze their favorite book as a child looking for messages of power, race, gender, class, etc. The researchers found that all preservice teachers found critical literacy beneficial, yet they were concerned about

their own anxiety in addressing "touchy subjects" (p.62), "offending anyone by overstepping their boundaries" (p.62) or challenging district curricula.

In another example inside the teacher preparation classroom in an urban education program, Skerrett's (2010), secondary preservice teachers engaged in inquiry projects centered on investigating social justice issues over two semesters. Some of the issues that were included in the inquiry projects were abuse, dating violence, and hunger. This experience of conducting the inquiry themselves supported the teachers in allowing them to experience the process and challenges of doing such work before asking students to do so. As supported by the literature (Wetzel, et. al., 2019), preservice teachers in this study reported discomfort with critical topics, yet the author found hope in the personal and political growth of the teachers and in their dispositions to engage in critical literacy teaching based on her observations of their deep engagement and satisfaction from learning about social issues and developing their social action plans.

Very few studies have taken up the task of preparing preservice teachers for critical literacy through a field experience (Mosley, 2010; Rogers et. al., 2016; Saunders, 2012). In one example, Saunders (2012) focused on the practices of one preservice teacher during her internship and student teacher semesters as she immersed her class of high school juniors in critical literacy activities. In the racially and socio-economically divided school, Ms. Morgan's class was considered the "dumping ground" (p.19) of the English classes for students who were not considered college bound by the system. The preservice teacher's critique of the system and high expectations for her students were supported by the cooperating teacher and made her work possible. Students engaged in the use of cultural artifacts that were of their interest, read texts out

of the curriculum, and engaged in out of school literacies as they gained agency. Although the process was not perfect, and at times the preservice teachers let conversations about power and justice wind down in order to "keep peace" (p.21), this novice preservice teacher took risks and challenged established practices in order to engage in critical literacy practices with her cooperating teacher's support.

The reviewed articles on the preparation of preservice teachers for critical literacies all occurred in monolingual, English classrooms. While some have taken up the implementation of critical literacy in bilingual and Latinx spaces, there is a scarcity of knowledge focused on the preparation of bilingual and Latinx educators for critical literacy specifically. Just as the highschoolers in Saunders study, bilingual Latinx students often considered English Language Learners are unjustly excluded from critical literacy practices. This is detrimental because it perpetuates the idea that bilingual students, mostly Brown and Black children, should be focused on the acquisition of English and do not have time to engage in transformative and liberatory literacy practices such as critical literacies (Bacon, 2017; Daniel, 2008; Park, 2011). I argue that critical literacy, as well as anti-colonial practices, are crucial for minority school children as they are the most impacted by oppressive structures not only in schooling, but outside of school as well. I now review the few studies that take up the preparation of teachers for decolonial practices.

Preparation of Teachers for Decolonial Practices

Teacher education provides critical spaces where "problematic narratives...might be revealed, challenged, and interrupted so they are not thoughtlessly reproduced in schooling" (Kerr, 2014, p.84). However, teacher education programs must play their part, if we hope for a critical decolonizing literacy education. Yet, very little is known about how to engage teachers in critical reflection regarding colonialism and their preparation for a decolonizing teaching practices. In a search of scholarly publications on this topic using the Education Resources Information Center database (ERIC), I could not find an article focused on preparing teachers for anti-colonial practices in the US context. In contrast, our colleagues in Canada in the field of teacher education have begun the task of engaging preservice teachers with Indigenous perspectives (Dion, 2007; Haig-Brown, 2009; Kerr, 2014).

For instance, Kerr (2014), this self-identified settler, works with teacher candidates in Canada and centers Indigenous perspectives and decolonial frameworks in her pedagogy courses. She found a deep sense of resistance and passivity when engaging in Indigenous perspectives through films and a guest speaker. She shares how her teacher candidates perceived these perspectives as "difficult knowledges" or refusals to know and engage, (p.94) and exhibited anger at a guest scholar's use of the word spirituality when talking about public education. Kerr (2014) came to the realization that these teacher candidates had a deep incapacity to engage in these topics because of the fear of the loss of privileges and material benefits (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In other words, these Indigenous perspectives challenged the views of the teacher candidates of themselves as benevolent, while putting their rights to the land in question. She suggests teaching students attentiveness, or the ability to be ready to listen, and that making transparent the likelihood of resistance might help when engaging in these types of conversations. She found that

meeting teacher candidates in a "middle ground space" (p.101) where they are invited to make sense of their ideas and resistance, while not being left in guilt, can be generative.

Similarly, Haig-Brown (2009) centered Aboriginal peoples' experiences and histories in schooling in what she calls the decolonizing of education courses. In her Foundations of Education course, which usually begins with the education of settlers' children, this teacher educator introduces her course by establishing land and Aboriginal communities as the foundation of education in Canada. Discussions around Indigenous communities' every day educational practices and ceremonies, and their later experiences with assimilationist policies and practices, lead teacher candidates from all backgrounds to engage in deep reflection. In one example, a Black teacher candidate of Jamaican descent connected her traumatic experiences with racism to the colonial history in Canada and began to see herself in relation not only to White people in her city, but to Indigenous peoples and their land as well. She understood her own history as twice displaced (from Africa and then Jamaica) in relation to colonialism; this deeper understanding of history helped her begin her healing process in her new home. Both Kerr's (2014) and Haig-Brown's (2009) conceptualizations included reflections of their own work with teacher candidates regarding the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, histories, and experiences with schooling, yet Dion (2007) offers us a method for teachers to engage in a "pedagogy of remembrance" (p.330) and consider themselves in relationship to Aboriginal people. Dion (2007) argues that although schools and teachers are being encouraged to include Aborigonal content in their lessons, there is a limited understanding of Aboriginal culture, history, and people and these narratives are informed by dominant discourses in Canada.

As in Kerr's (2014) work, the teachers in Dion's (2007) study position themselves at first as benevolent strangers, claiming knowing nothing about and having nothing to do with Aboriginal people, as they aim to protect themselves from the fear of having to recognize their own roles in the colonial project. However, through the process of remembrance the teachers are able to juxtaposition cultural artifacts such as pictures from their own lives to class texts, visuals, or other artforms in order to see themselves in relation to their histories alongside Aboriginal people. The author found that while teachers are often fearful of confrontation, seeming ignorant, or going against parents in schools when discussing these histories, the assignment in class offered a space to engage with these alternate ways of knowing with lessening fear and resistance. This course experience allowed the teachers to recognize their own role and investment in the dominant discourse about Aborinal people in Canada. Additionally, some teachers began to change the content they included in their curriculum, including texts and media by Aboriginal authors and artists. The inclusion of storytelling as a valid practice and introduction of questioning regarding Aboriginal communities and land emerged in their teaching practices as well.

The work of teacher educators in Canada provided me with a point of departure when thinking about the preparation of teachers for anti-colonial critical literacy instruction in teacher education programs in the United States as well as in Puerto Rico. The content included in the courses mentioned above made space for the often silenced histories and experiences of Indiginous communities and these experiences pushed teacher candidates to reflect on their own identities in relation to these groups and to settler colonialism. In my work, I go a step further by asking preservice teachers to collaboratively reflect on their own relationships to colonialism,

across contexts and to then engage in anti-colonial critical literacy instructional design for young students in both Texas and Puerto Rico.

Methodology

This critical case study (Carspecken, 1996; Thomas 2011) is part of a larger research project inspired by a global classroom initiative, a university program at a large, public Texas university for faculty members from across the globe collaborate and co-teach through the use of technology to enrich university student's learning experiences. This initiative, as well as our shared interest and commitment to the preparation of preservice teachers for critical literacy and anti-colonial practices, brought Dr. Costa, an experienced literacy teacher educator at a public university in Puerto Rico, and I together in this project.

Context

The collaboration first consisted of virtual and in-person meetings to collaborate on the preparation of two literacy methods courses in Puerto Rico and Texas simultaneously. These courses were planned to include a series of experiences for the preservice teachers that would allow them to learn about, reflect on, and plan for critical literacy and anti-colonial practices as literacy teachers. As instructors we decided on four class sessions in which to hold synchronous classroom discussions, the topics for these, the academic texts, and the discussion questions that would guide our conversation on the Zoom platform (see *Appendix 1*: Topics of synchronous classroom discussions). These discussions served the purpose of prompting the preservice teachers to reflect on their backgrounds and contexts, the current social and political moment, their identities as teachers of Color, and how these relate to learning how to enact critical, anti-colonial literacy practices. These whole group discussions lasted between thirty and forty minutes in length.

As part of the collaboration, preservice teachers also connected with each other in what we called virtual groups of five to six students across contexts. Using technology such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Facetime, these virtual groups met following whole group discussions to collaborate on tasks related to that week's topic. In one example of this, students created a web of ideas of classroom activities they envisioned related to one of the three decolonial methods proposed by Zavala (2016) counter/storytelling, healing, or reclaiming (see *Appendix 2* for the four small group activities completed collaborative in each of the class sessions). Lastly, teachers in both contexts designed instructional opportunities for elementary students in literacy classrooms in which they were asked to apply the theories and methods learned in class. Unfortunately, COVID-19 came as a challenge to the actual implementation of the lessons in both contexts.

Participants

One group of preservice teachers invited to participate in this research study are part of a twenty-three preservice teacher cohort at the university in Texas, with nineteen females and four males. Nineteen out of the twenty-four preservice teachers identify as Mexican or Mexican-American; one student self identified as Colombian; and four as white. All participants consider themselves to be bilingual. At the time of the study these PTs were taking the *Reading Methods* course within their Bilingual & Bicultural Education teacher preparation program and were two semesters away from graduation. The participants in Puerto Rico are a group of thirteen self identified Puerto Rican females, also in their junior year. All of them speak Spanish as a first language and a six speak English as a second language. At the time, these PTs were taking *Enseñanza de la lectoescritura en los grados 4to a 6to* or the Teaching of Literacy in Grades 4th to 6th.

Positionality

I was both the researcher in this study and the instructor for the *Bilingual Reading Methods* course at university in Texas. My Puerto Rican identity is deeply intertwined with why I wanted to embark on this project. I received most of my education on the Island, with a few exceptions due to my father's career in the United States Army. My K-12th educational experiences along with my preparation on the Island to become an English teacher were far removed from any ideas about critical pedagogy, critical literacy, or decolonial ideas. This worries me as a Puerto Rican scholar now aware of the colonial state of my country, particularly with the political turmoil in the recent months leading to the resignation of the former governor (Fernandez, 2019). This awakening of the Puerto Rican people has also been full of hope as generations from all backgrounds engaged in powerful actions that led to change. As teacher educators, I contend this moment cannot be missed, but rather must be capitalized on as we explicitly prepare teachers for a different type of literacy education that centers critical and anti-colonial frameworks that position young children as active agents. During my time as a literacy educator in Texas, I have become invested in the schooling experiences of Mexican American children, and have developed a commitment to the critical preparation of bilingual teachers in this context. This mesh of identities led me to connect my experiences across these contexts as we embarked to prepare literacy teachers to name and address systemic social inequities and their colonized contexts.

Data Collection

The data presented in this article was collected during the Spring 2020 academic semester. The data analysis in this article focuses primarily on four transcribed Zoom collaborative sessions

that occurred on January 28th, February 4th, February 11th, and March 10th. Only the conversations between the preservice teachers in both contexts were transcribed lasting 13, 40, 40 and 30 minutes respectively. The class and guiding questions were in Spanish, yet students spoke freely including English and translanguaging mostly in the Texas context. It is important to note that I purposefully decided not to translate these transcripts. During these conversations we spoke Puerto Rican Spanish, Mexican American Spanish, Colombian Spanish, English, and translanguaged between Spanish and English. To have translated from Spanish to English would have erased a part of these PTs' complex identities. This article is meant for a bilingual audience, or monolingual readers who are comfortable with just understanding my analysis of the events and portions of the data where PTs use the English language. Additionally, I name teachers by their context either Puerto Rico (PR) or Texas (TX), not by pseudonyms in the transcript, not as an erasure of their individual identities, but as a focus on the collective and how these geographical labels speak volumes about how they approached these theories and practices.

Data Analysis

Anchored in my theoretical frameworks focused on critical pedagogy, critical literacy theory, and decolonial methods in education, and guided by Saldaña's (2016), analysis framework, I set out to analyze the Zoom collaboration transcripts. In the first round of coding, I engaged in inductive analysis open to general codes regarding how preservice teachers took up the theories in class, how they reacted to these, and how the collaboration impacted the learning experience. A total of twenty codes were generated during the first round of coding including: "PT's understanding of Critical Literacy concepts", "Commitment to the new generation" and "the collaboration between two places raises deeper problematic notions and conversations that

help us deepen understandings," for example. I then engaged in a second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2016), where codes were collapsed by categories. In one example, the new code "Critical understandings" included understandings of critical pedagogy, critical literacy, decolonial methods, and when PT's drew connections to larger societal systems. During the second round of coding, I collapsed my codes into eleven. During this process, I also coded for disconfirming data where outlier preservice teachers demonstrated the opposite of a defined code that captured what the majority of the preservice teachers were raising. Subsequently, using the eleven codes from the second round, I counted the code occurrences per week, to visualize how often a theme occurred, when in time, and how these increased or decreased across time. This helped me present representative data from across the data set. Lastly, during a third round of categorization of codes, I selected which categories/themes would be included in this paper, which were guided by my research question, theoretical framework, and past experience studying the preparation of teachers for critical practices. After analyzing each week of collaborative Zoom sessions, I created analytic memos (Saldaña, 2016) to support the writing of my findings.

Findings

We now turn to the findings section where we learn what discourses related to anti-colonial critical literacy frameworks emerged from the cross-context collaborations these PTs participated in. I organize these into *Awakenings, Restrictions and Ruptures,* and what I call the *Double Narrative Argument.* Awakenings refer to moments that jolted deep understandings of the critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and decolonial theories and methods by the PTs. Next we see what restrictions and ruptures PTs conceptualize for when this work can take place. Lastly, the double narrative argument refers to the PTs justification of why both the traditional school

curriculum and more critical narratives should be taught in the classroom. It is important to note that although four weeks of data were analyzed, the data included in this article, only covers weeks one to three, or 01/28/20- 02/11/20. Since the last session was focused on practical implications and included a review of the three theoretical frameworks discussed, the teachers did not have much time to engage in conversation.

Awakenings: Critical Pedagogy, Critical Literacy & Anti-Colonial Methods

Across the collaborative conversations analyzed through the lenses of critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and anti-colonial theories, the most common discourses present were moments of what I call awakenings, or moments where different engagement in discourse jolted deep understandings of these theories. These awakenings can also be considered moments of partial *concientización* (Freire, 1970), when PTs demonstrate being in the process of developing a critical awareness through conversation and reflection. These moments when PTs became cognizant of the relationships between their socio-political contexts, power and schooling, and at times were able to connect the critical issues discussed in class to broader socio-political systems, were mediated by different sources. In this paper, I do not focus on the sources (class readings, past experiences, professor prompts, prompt from a classmate, etc.) that mediated these awakenings, but on the discourses that were raised. However, they deserve a noteworthy mention. In most instances, PTs shared awakenings based on the readings assigned in class, as we will see in the data. These awakenings also stemmed from a critical look at our contexts and colonial pasts as teacher educators centered the colonial histories and current day struggles consistently throughout the weeks. Also, related to the design of the class, the collaborative conversations in themselves held across the two contexts supported the awakenings that PTs exhibited across the

theories. Lastly, PTs awakenings were also undoubtedly linked to their schooling experiences, as is common in the literature (Britzman, 2012; Lortie, 1975), and included a strong commitment to the next generation of children (Brown, 2014) in efforts to offer the critical education that they themselves did not receive in either context. I organize this set of findings by the theories we discussed in weeks one to three: critical pedagogy, critical literacies, and decolonial methods.

Critical Pedagogy. The course design allowed for PTs to be exposed to theoretical concepts they were more familiar with, as they had learned about these in previous courses (critical pedagogy), and then built to less familiar concepts (anti-colonial theory). During the first collaborative session (01/28/20), students read two pieces focused on critical pedagogy. In this first example a student from TX shared a shift in her understanding of what counts as literacy, which stems from class readings, from a focus on physical books to how children first read, "people emotions and all of that:"

> que andaba hablando mucho de que cuando él aprendió a leer, no era físicamente, sino el aprendió a leer, las cosas, los objetos, las personas, los colores [referring to Paulo Freire]...por que yo cuando pienso de la primera vez que aprendí a leer, yo pienso físicamente en un libro, pero también tengo que entender que no era así, por que la primera cosa que empezamos a leer, sino era la gente, las emociones y todo eso. (01/28/20, Zoom transcript).

Although this student had read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) the previous semester in a theoretical course, it was not until this methods course, where she came to this simple but powerful awakening of a broader definition of what it means to learn to read. The mesh here of sociocultural concepts and a reading methods course was what this student needed to be able to make sense of the theoretical concepts she had read about in her foundations course but had not placed in the context of reading.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, a PR student drew similar understandings from the reading, but took this a step further drawing a connection to her past schooling experience and systemic oppression saying "nosotros leímos el cómic de Freire y entonces yo estaba conversando que es algo que yo relacionándolo a que cuando yo estaba en la escuela elemental pues es una realidad en que el sistema quiere que los niños aprendan de una forma mecánica y no esforzando lo que es lo crítico el pensar más allá, el cuestionar las cosas que son ahora...que seamos seres pensantes por nosotros mismos no que otros piensen por nosotros…" She then went deeper while trying to address the guiding question posed in class and added "y relacionándolo al contexto a lo que está pasando en actualidad con nuestro país es algo que se está abriendo paso ahora, con todo lo que está pasando se está cuestionando lo que está haciendo el gobierno actualmente, el manejo del gobierno" (01/28/20, Zoom transcript). Here we see how this student was not only awakened by the class readings, but drew powerful connections to her past schooling experiences to illustrate the mechanical, banking education (Freire, 1970) received by most Puerto Rican children in public schools. She then brought these into the present, connecting the imaginary (Medina & Wohlwend, 2014) possibility of a critical education to the 2019 uprising of the Puerto Rican public, where thousands of Puerto Ricans shut down highways and local commerce and flooded the streets in protests until the former governor, Ricky Rosello, resigned.

Critical Literacy. The following week (02/04/20) the discussion focused on critical literacy as conceptualized byVazquez, Janks and Comber (2019). During the conversation, Dr. Costa brought up how PR students often discuss in her class the differences between the history taught in school and more historical perspectives discovered later during university years. This led a PR student to expand:

> ...por que la realidad de asunto es que el libro se escribe bajo la perspectiva del colonizador, del que los escribió...o España o Estados Unidos...pero cuando llegamos a lo que es universidad y cojemos historia como tal pues es muy diferentes por que ahora presentan otras cosas, otros datos y nos permiten lo que es la investigación, y nosotros mismos vamos y buscamos más información y más cosas sobre lo que fue la historia de Puerto Rico y nos damos cuenta de la realidad que no es como no las enseñaron... Entonces ahí viene lo que estamos hablando ahora que es la literacidad crítica, que se está dejando para cuando ya estamos adultos, cuando ya estamos grandes y no está practicando en la edad preescolar, elemental e inclusive intermedia y superior… (02/04/20, Zoom transcript).

Her past schooling experiences and awakenings of the deliberate distortion and blocking of access to more broad historical and literary accounts of the Spanish colonization and the US invasion of PR, led this PT to verbalize the clear lack of access to critical literacy instruction on the Island for students in grades K-12. Although she showed agency when she spoke of now being an adult in university where she can research and gather new information, she understands the school's role in excluding content and literacy practices that could empower children and young adults before reaching the university level.

Back in Texas, as part of the same conversation, a preservice teacher tried to make sense of why there is a lack of access to critical literacy instruction in schools by mentioning standardized testing in the state of Texas. She continued to show frustration and feeling deceived about the fact that she is now learning the "true American story" at the university level, "...por que si me siento como engañada de todo el sistema, like, no es posible que ya a la edad de estar en la universidad es que en verdad estoy aprendiendo la realidad de la historia de America, it's kind of crazy…" She continued by making a commitment, like many of her peers, to teaching more critically to students from an early age, now that she knows and understands the things as they really happened, "es nuestro deber ya que nosotros sabemos y entendemos las cosas que en

verdad pasaron pues nada más tenerlo en mente para que cuando seamos maestras le podamos enseñar a los niños a temprana edad" (02/04/20, Zoom transcript). Both PTs share the same problem, namely a lack of access to critical literacy until college, yet the PT in Texas is able to name standardized testing as a mechanism of control (Segal, 2003), which is perceived as much more pervasive in her context.

Decolonial Methods. During our third Zoom whole group conversation focused on Decolonial Methods (Zavala, 2016), a Texas student posed a simple but powerful question after listening to a long discussion in the Puerto Rico classroom led by Dr. Costa where she explained the pervasiveness of colonial ideologies to the PTs in her classroom:

> ...eso es lo que pasa en las colonias, las colonias lo que ocurre, lo que importa es lo que plantea el colonizador. En nuestro caso, todo lo que sea Norteamericano, es lo que vale...todo lo que sea Europeo, cuando pensamos de música...no hablamos de...rápidamente pensamos en los Europeos, cuando hablamos de literatura, rápidamente pensamos en los Europeos o Norteamericanos… (02/11/20, Zoom transcript).

From this conversation, the Texas student became vulnerable by sharing "¿Una pregunta que yo personalmente tendría sería quién sería nuestro like [inaudible audio] colonizador, sería como los anglos [inaudible audio] o sería como las influencias europeas?" This simple question led to a deeper conversation about local Texas history, the Indigenous communities present here before the Spanish, French, and English people´s arrival, and that student's understanding of whiteness and English as central in her local context:

> el conocimiento con lo [inaudible audio] especialmente ya que está en un país Americano, entonces por eso...incluso en [university] hemos hablado mucho de esto, que inclusivamente los nombres que antes eran en español porque Texas solía ser parte de México están...no se si estan haciendo Spanish [inaudible audio] pero si quieren hacer los nombres más cortos para facilitar a su propio lenguaje. Y entonces indirectamente se está borrando el idioma español… se ve muy subtle, pero si se está borrando un chorro de cultura. (02/11/20, Zoom Transcript).

Here we see how the collaboration in itself led this student in Texas to ask herself a critical question, “who is the colonizer here”, after listening to Dr. Costa’s short lecture on colonialism in Puerto Rico. Undoubtedly, the collaboration in itself holds merit and has impact on the PTs learning, I dedicate another article to that process in itself and its value (Batista-Morales, in preparation). Analyzing how preservice teachers take up these complex theories within methods courses is essential if we are truly committed to preparing Latinx teachers for critical and anti-colonial practices in the literacy classrooms that have children who have historically been deprived from these experiences. While these awakenings are an important step in the PT’s growth journeys, data also show hesitation and restrictions for this type of teaching being possible in their worlds as early educators. We turn to those findings next.

From Awakenings to Restrictions and Ruptures

Despite the powerful awakenings PTs demonstrated through conversation, the second type of discourse that emerged included restrictions around when and how these types of critical and anti-colonial pedagogies can occur in real classrooms. These restrictions were often coupled with what I call ruptures, or moments where PTs went back and forth collectively, naming real systemic restrictions, while rupturing through those with possible solutions. These discourses stemmed at times from their life and schooling experiences, but were also co-constructed or deconstructed during collaborative conversations as PTs both agreed and disagreed with their peers.

Discourses around Early Childhood. The most common restriction named for engaging in anti-colonial critical literacy work was the age group of the students— a perception of an inability of doing this work in the early childhood classroom. These ideologies about what young

children can do are not uncommon (e.g. Payne, et al., 2020) and pervade both contexts, Texas in the Global North and Puerto Rico located in the Global South (Perez & Saavedra, 2017). In a conversation on 02/11/20, as students discussed how presenting two distinct narratives could help them protect themselves from outer policing (I discuss this topic at length in the last section of findings), a Puerto Rico student shared, "tienes que poner dos formas de pensar para que los niños escojan...a lo mejor cuando son pequeños no pueden...pero ya cuando…[inaudible audio] (02/11/20, Zoom transcript). Here this rupture, or the possibility of doing this work by teaching two narratives, is limited in the mind of this student by the child's age, stating that "maybe, when they are small they can't." In a second example, a Texas students acknowledged she grew up thinking young children "are not that intelligent", but that she is now learning "that is not true"—"crecimos con la mentalidad de que los niños pequeños no son tan inteligentes que apenas están aprendiendo que eso no es verdad, ellos están aprendiendo cosas nuevas cada día y su cerebro y su mentalidad está cambiando todos los días…" This demonstrates a shift in discourse. Although it is not clear where this shift came from, this student's comment in class shows her understanding of young children's brilliance and had the potential of impacting other PTs as we see next.

In this last example, the discourse around early childhood was faced with a rupture, or a possibility for this work to occur, from a student from the other context. In this example, the class was engaged in a short lecture by Dr. Costa as part of our critical literacy discussion on 02/04/20, which reminded us that education is a political act: "pero también hay que entender que la educación es un acto político...y la educación siempre asume una posición, no existe la neutralidad y esa es una de las cosas que plantea el artículo, que no hay textos neutrales, los textos siempre te posicionan." This prompted a student in Texas to express her concerns regarding doing

this work with young children:

> **TX student**: Este semestre estamos trabajando con niños muy pequeños, es difícil para mi pensar como ellos, es difícil para ellos en pensar en esos perspectivos [perspectivas], y ver como, como maestra, como enseñarles que hay muchas perspectivas, porque muchas veces ellos piensan que la perspectiva de la maestra es la correcta, o su perspectiva es mejor y cuando son tan pequeños es tan difícil enseñarles que hay muchas perspectivas, no tan solo la que hay en su clase…es muy duro, explicarles a los niños chiquitos que hay otras opiniones de muchas cosas porque normalmente la maestra tienen una opinión de una cosa, y aveces no tiene mucha información sobre otro lado de la historia...o otro lado de la política...pero es difícil que una maestra que pueda ser unbiased (02/04/20, Zoom transcript).

When inviting the Puerto Rican students to chime in, this resulted in a possible solution for doing anti-colonial critical literacy work in the pre-school context:

> **PR**: Si es algo que se puede trabajar desde la preescolaridad, pero dando el espacio de que se de más cotidianamente...respecto a leer un cuento, a cuando ellos mismos tienen conversaciones y tienen diferencias...por ejemplo como cuando un niño dice que algo es mejor que otra cosa, y un niño diga lo contrario se puede abrir el espacio y ese debate a lo que es el pensamiento crítico por que cada uno tienen una perspectiva diferente y entonces analizar ese pensamiento y esa idea que cada cual tiene...pero un nivel de desarrollo un poquito más bajo por decirlo así. (02/04/20, Zoom transcript).

Here the Puerto Rican student shared how we could potentially engage in critical literacy work, specifically by bringing in topics from children's daily lives and used an example of common disagreements between peers in classrooms and how those can open up space for a variety of perspectives. Although the student here used the term "critical thinking", which is sometimes used by preservice teachers in place of the terms critical pedagogy or critical literacy (see Vazquez, Janks & Comber, (2019) to understand how these terms are different), her description of the possible inclusion of a variety of perspectives in early childhood classroom still aligns with critical literacy tenets. This opens up a window, or possible awakening, of pedagogical and ideological opportunity for the students who have expressed restrictions regarding the early childhood space.

Time and a Possible Solution. A second restriction can be conceptualized as time. Although there is only one mention of this discourse in the data, it is noteworthy and leads us into the second section of findings, as PTs looked for solutions to make this critical teaching possible. In this instance, Dr. Costa posed the question, *are decolonial methods in education possible?*, as part of our discussion of Zavala's (2016) article. Here a PR student jumped in, showing confidence in her response and shared, "yo pienso que es posible pero a largoooo [emphasis] porque ahora mismo en el medio del siglo 21 estamos demasiado colonizados…"(02/11/20, Zoom transcription). Here she was expressing how we are "too colonized" [referring to PR], and how this work would be long term. This caught Dr. Costa's attention and she prompted the student to expand:

> Okay bueno yo he pensado que la educación decolonial si se puede lograr pero a largo plazo, que por ejemplo en Puerto Rico en pleno siglo 21 estamos demasiado colonizados, tu vas a las áreas auténticas de Puerto Rico, y la mayoría de las cosas que tu ves la mayoría de las tiendas son de inglés, por ejemplo no te venden o bien poquita artesanía puertorriqueña y esa pequeña puestos de artesanía puertorriqueña tienen su rótulo en inglés, estamos demasiados americanizados, pienso que si se puede pero es un trabajo a largo plazo, tal vez ni lo verán ni siquiera por ejemplo mis hijos ya mis nietos poco a poco, si estamos demasiado americanizados, por lo menos aquí Puerto Rico.

The student goes on to define colonialism as a lack of local Puerto Rican crafts in stores, an abundance of the English language around her, and as everyone being "too Americanized," compounding both colonialism and US Imperialism in her response. This is relevant because as a Puerto Rican researcher outside the Island, I define anti-colonial work as going back to healing, ancestral practices lost after Spanish colonialism, however what we see in this piece of data and in conversations with PTs and Dr. Costa is that anti-colonial work has a different localized meaning for Puerto Ricans on the island in 2020.

Within this same conversation, another Puerto Rican student was the one who engaged in

the rupture, or provided a possible solution to the issue of anti-colonial work taking generations. "Yo pienso que el pensamiento decolonial si se puede integrar actualmente a la educación porque es un pensamiento que puede ir a la par con lo colonial pero teniendo en cuenta ambos pensamientos, como lo decolonial y colonial para contrastarlo" (02/11/20, Zoom transcription). Here she introduced the idea of teaching "two thoughts" or two narratives, what she called the colonial and the decolonial, referring to cultural and social practices that are deemed Puerto Rican versus those that are deemed American and allowing children to be critical and chose "o para que uno sea crítico y uno elija cual de los dos y el que uno eliga cual es el que le gusta…" (02/11/20, Zoom transcription). This rupture, or presenting two narratives and giving choice to children is a common theme across the weeks of collaboration. I go into detail in this next section of findings.

The Double Narrative Argument

I dedicate this last section of findings to the discourse around what I call the double narrative argument which permeated the data across weeks two and three. Here I refer to moments when PTs expressed interest in teaching what they called two narratives, referring to the state imposed curriculum and the anti-colonial critical literacy practices we were inviting them into as teacher educators. This discourse stemmed from different points of departure, but in its first occurrence in the data on 02/04/2020, it resulted from a confluence of understanding teaching as a political act and Puerto Rico and the US's *political* parties when responding to the prompt "How did this reading (on critical literacy) impacted your understanding of literacy?" After the preservice teacher made this imprecise connection, she then went to explain how we needed to give children the opportunity to choose from the two sides presented. TX: "I guess like...trayendo like política en el tema, aunque no necesites ser negativo, es no más como darle la

oportunidad a ellos poder pensar, how can they form their own opinions." This point was then supported by a student in Puerto Rico: "Estoy de acuerdo de poner de partidos políticos que uno esté de acuerdo, pero que los niños puedan decidir por ellos mismos cual es el que ellos prefieren…" (Feb. 4th, 2020, Zoom transcript). From this initial perspective, other similar discourses followed, like the need to teach two perspectives to be able to prepare children for standardized testing:

> **TX**: Pero creo que un problema que tenemos aquí en los Estados Unidos, es que, haz de que cuenta que osea si le podemos enseñar a los estudiantes de lo decolonial, pero en los exámenes estandarizados no van a preguntar sobre eso, entonces no nos podemos enfocar like cien por ciento como dijiste en escoger el libro de Christopher Columbus o escoger el libro que habla sobre el point of view de los indígenas... entonces los estudiantes sufren porque no les enseñamos lo que el estado les está requiriendo (Feb 11th, 2020, Zoom transcript).

Here we learn that designing literacy methods courses that center critical and anti-colonial approaches might lead to awakenings and ruptures for PTs, like this one above, where the PT suggested teaching two narratives to prepare students for standardized testing. However, we also see that no matter how critical these courses, readings, and conversations are, the pervasiveness of the concept of teachers as neutral workers of the state continued to hold strong. Although at first glance it might seem like all PTs who proposed this solution were using the same reasoning, upon closer analysis, we learn that PTs have different reasons for entertaining this possible solution.

The Belief of Neutrality. One of the reasons why PTs proposed the double narrative solution stemmed from the belief that teachers need to be neutral and unbiased and teach the content set out by governmental agencies in each context. In this first example, during a discussion centered around critical literacies and the restrictions and ruptures of doing this work with preschool children, a Texas students mentioned how hard it is for teachers to be unbiased:

> **TX**: También es muy duro, explicarles a los niños chiquitos que hay otras opiniones de muchas cosas porque normalmente la maestra tienen una opinión de una cosa, y aveces no tiene mucha información sobre otro lado de la historia...o otro lado de la política...pero es difícil que una maestra que pueda ser unbiased (02/04/20, Zoom transcript).

In this portion of the data we see how matter of factly this PT states that teachers should be unbiased, but recognized that teachers also do have specific opinions and stances on issues and mentions how they might not have a lot of information about "the other side." In another example, after a discussion of the how teaching using anti-colonial methods might take generations and a student in Puerto Rico proposing teaching two narratives as a way of contrasting, this Texas student responded that it is important to give options and independence to students because some might argue that "we are forcing the children."

> **TX**: Okay, yo pienso que es importante darle a los niños independencia, sorry I get nervous in front of people, independencia porque creo que muchas argumentan que tal vez estamos forzando a los niños y creo que eso debemos de darle las opciones para que ellos puedan pensar independientemente. (02/11/20, Zoom transcript)

It is unclear who this PT was referring to when she mentioned someone might argue that teachers force students in their opinions, but we might assume that she was referring to parents, administrators, or other people who might engage in real or imagined policing of what goes on in classrooms. A few minutes later in that same conversation, after both teacher educators struggled with the idea of teaching both narratives as in this example, a Puerto Rican teacher continued to stick to the idea of teaching both narratives.

> **TX**: ...estoy como batallando en mi cabeza porque ha sido una historia para mi [inaudible audio] he estado escribiendo un poco cuando españa llega a Puerto Rico, cuando estados unidos llega a Puerto Rico y la historia ha sido tan brutal ha sido tan abusadora, tan oprimida, perdón opresora, a lo que éramos antes de que llegarán y a lo que pudimos haber sido. Entonces batallo con esa idea de si presentar varias ideas al niño y ayudarlo a que piense críticamente y a escoger y a la misma vez, como que a mi me duele tanto que para mi es tan claro, para mi es tan claro, volver a la tierra, volver a sanar, volver a liberarnos, volver a tener independencia de escoger, de escoger nuestro propio país, de

liberar la educación, por eso estoy batallando" (02/11/20, Zoom transcript).

Yet, even after this plea, a PT in Puerto Rico holds strong to the idea of teaching both narratives, because if you do not teach the curriculum given by the department of education you are not doing "your job as a teacher"— PR: "Como maestra tu puedes dar los textos de la manera decolonial, pero tu te tienes que basar en un currículo que te da el Departamento porque si tu no vas a ese currículo, ya vas hacer algo contra la escuela como tal, y no estas haciendo tu trabajo como maestra (02/11/20, Zoom transcript).

As a Subversive Strategy. A second reason why preservice teachers argued for the double narrative was as a way of subversion, or a way of including the anti-colonial critical literacy narrative without being noticed or as a way of empowering their students. In this example, a student in Texas explained how she needs to be direct with students even from an early age about what will be on the test and what is the more accurate story:

> ...creo que es más importante que le digamos a los estudiantes eso es lo que el gobierno nos dice que les tenemos que enseñar por que a lo mejor you are going to get tested on it, tienen que pasar los exámenes. Decirles, esto es lo que el gobierno quiere que les tenemos pero eso también es un poquito más de la realidad y de la historia verdadera de lo que había pasado. Es nuestro deber ya que nosotros sabemos y entendemos las cosas que en verdad pasaron pues nada más tenerlo en mente para que cuando seamos maestras le podamos enseñar a los niños a temprana edad (02/04/20, Zoom transcript).

Here the PT ended with a commitment to her future students and a feeling of "duty" to teach more 'true' narratives now that they are aware of these in their adulthood. This discourse continued to resurface the next week while discussing decolonial methodologies in education (Zavala, 2016). This second Texas student made a connection to her high school experiences:

> Si, yo recuerdo también un libro, creo que también yo en mi preparatoria, en high school, a mi mis maestros [inaudible audio] clase pero mi maestro siempre me decía mira esto es lo que el examen quiere que les enseñe pero esta es la realidad, especialmente acerca de los indígenas que estaban aquí antes que [inaudible audio] y todo...y yo por eso con este

> maestro yo no me sentí tan engañada ya cuando llegue al colegio… (02/11/20, Zoom transcript).

For this PT, the idea of teaching both narratives stemmed from her schooling experiences and her high school teacher being clear about what would be tested and what was the reality about the Indigenous communities that were present in North America prior to settler colonialism. Unlike her peer, in the first set of findings who shared she felt "engañada" by her schooling system, this PT shared that because of the openness of this teacher she did not feel deceived once she reached college, a feeling she might want to replicate in her future students.

In this last example from the Puerto Rican classroom on 02/11/20, Rocío, the teacher educator, posed a question to all students, "Y la pregunta sería, ¿permiten los departamentos de educación en Texas o en Puerto Rico, que se adopten unas posiciones decoloniales?" A Puerto Rican student responded with a clear no, but with the possible solution of using both narratives in the classroom:

> **PR**: Yo pienso que el departamento de Puerto Rico no lo permiten pero toman esa idea y textos [inaudible audio] que traigan esos temas a la sala de clase... nosotros como maestros en la sala de clase tenemos cierta libertad de incluir textos que puedan contrastar y crear el pensamiento crítico de los estudiante como contrastando ambos pensamientos a lo colonial y lo decolonial (02/11/20, Zoom transcript).

Although she expressed no as the initial answer to Rocío's question, this PT then went on to discuss how even though those topics are not "allowed" by the Department of Education, she as the classroom teacher has "certain liberty" to bring texts that can help students compare and contrast both narratives. In this section, we see how preservice teachers' pedagogical understandings of how to include anti-colonial critical literacy practices in spaces where they believe these will not be welcomed. Although they appear to vouch for the same idea of teaching

both narratives, it is important to analyze what they say closely to understand where their discourse stems from and what purpose it serves. Much more is left to know regarding how teacher preparation programs prepare Latinx students to understand and put anti-colonial critical literacy practices into action.

Discussion

Cervantes-Soon (2018), in her piece about bilingual teacher education moving towards an ant-colonial path, calls for a stance in the official curriculum of bilingual education method courses. A centering of discussions around PTs identities, histories, sociopolitical contexts, and space for healing (Villanueva, 2013). In this article, we see how dialogue (Freire, 1970) across transnational contexts while centering critical pedagogy, literacies, and anti-colonial theories and methods, led to awakenings, challenges, and ruptures for Latinx PTs to take on critical theories within methods courses. The analysis of these conversations leads me to argue three considerations that extend the field of literacy teacher preparation for transformative practices.

Emotion

It is now supported by some research that emotion is an integral dimension of teaching, learning, and becoming a teacher (Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016). However, there is a lot of space for the idea of emotion to be conceptualized through critical frameworks such as Chicana feminist scholarship (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1987) or in relation to the development of critical consciousness or political clarity (Bartolomé, 2000). Throughout the data, I saw how PTs referred to emotions as they parsed through the critical concepts discussed in class, whether these references were direct or indirect. Anger, frustration, suffering, and fear were some concepts that surfaced. At the beginning of the findings section, we see how a student in Texas shifts her definition of what it means to read from "a physical book to...to the first thing we learn to read is

people, *emotions* and all of that" (01/28/20, Zoom transcript, translated) making an important shift in beliefs around what fits within the definition of literacy. In a second example, we see how another PT shared feelings of decievement, frustration, and anger at learning the "true American story" at the university level (02/04/20, Zoom transcript). Referring to her future students, another PT shared how she wants to protect her students from suffering by teaching them what will be tested in their standardized testing (Segal, 2003). In this space, mostly occupied by Latina women, we see PTs are comfortable with naming and expressing emotion. Now the question remains, can these awakenings connected to emotion build stronger connections to learning and ideological shifts than traditional cognitive concepts of understanding can?

Beyond Complexities in Taking Up Anti-Colonial Theories

Sociohistorical context is central to all the theoretical orientations employed in framing this research study, critical pedagogy, critical literacy and anti-colonial practices. However what I would like to highlight here is how the PTs in each context took up the term colonialism in relation to their time and space, as well as how that differed from the ideas held by me as a researcher occupying both spaces. An onscreen discussion by Dr. Costa of what colonialism looks like in Puerto Rico led a student in Texas to ask "then who is our colonizer, would it be like the anglos? (02/11/20, Zoom transcript, translated). This student went on to identify whiteness as today's colonizer and to describe how this whiteness materializes itself in the ways that English erases Spanish in her community. In Puerto Rico, a student defined colonialism as being too Americanized, an abundance of English in a Spanish speaking country, and a lack of Puerto Rican culture in the form of local crafts availability. These conceptualizations of colonialism are relevant because they only exist in the now, in these PTs' realities in 2020 as they walk down the

street or as they go into a store. While these fail to go back in time and situate today's sociopolitical issues in a colonial history, for example in understanding that the presence of the Spanish language is too a product of colonization, these uses of the term ask the question — how will we, as teacher educators, take up the highly contextualized definitions of these theoretical concepts? Can we, and should we, put aside our own agendas as we center PTs understanding of these theories?

The Hold of Neutrality as Teachers of Color

Lastly, the tie to neutrality needs to be examined from the lens of teachers of Color (Brown, 2014; Flores, 2019). Most of the literature on preparing teachers for transformative and critical practices in the literacy classroom is based on white preservice teachers (e.g. Kerr, 2018; Wetzel, et al., 2019). For example, in Kerr's (2014) study, white teachers who were exposed to decolonial theories in their education course showed refusal to engage, anger, and fear of losing material privileges and benefits. The ways that teachers of Color specifically take on these critical and anti-colonial theories needs to be analyzed in more depth. Particular to this study, the reasons that PTs held on to the idea of neutrality, whether in striving to be unbiased or as a subversive strategy, need to be explored in other studies with a lens that centers teachers of Color, or women and men who experience life on a different plane than white preservice teachers, and then become educators. While we need to continue to engage in much ideological work in teacher education programs, researchers and teachers educators must center teachers' identities in new ways.

Implications

This research has the potential to positively impact public education across Texas and Puerto Rico. By exploring the ways in which literacy teachers can best be prepared for

anti-colonial critical literacy, we begin to provide pathways for Latinx children to engage in literacy experiences that go well beyond developing basic, mechanical reading skills (Bacon, 2017; Daniel, 2008; Park, 2011). This is important if we are committed to providing children of Color opportunities to understand and critique not only their social realities but also their colonial histories. Although COVID-19 created a challenge for PTs to put the instructional activities they had designed into practice, it is important to imagine (Medina & Wohlwend, 2014) possibilities for children of Color in literacy classrooms.

The overall findings of this research give voice to the emotions, challenges, and powerful remedies that PTs experienced and conjured as they were asked to take on complex theories and frameworks. While it is crucial for literacy teacher educators to continue to wrestle with the challenges of centering critical literacy (Wetzel, et. al., 2019) in methods courses, we cannot ignore the deeply rooted colonial mindsets that leave PTs, and ourselves, centering Eurocentric knowledges and values (Mignolo, 2000) in our literacy classrooms. This is particularly important for teacher preparation programs that serve predominantly teachers of Color as we explore how these women and men take up indigeneity and colonialism in different ways than white PTs (e.g. Kerr, 2014). Lastly, while the awakenings, ruptures, and strategies PTs across context extend the field of literacy teacher preparation, conversations about these theories are insufficient (Montano, et al., 2002). The real work will begin when we invite PTs into real classrooms and support them in implementing instruction that truly centers the social worlds and colonial histories of children of Color at the same time they develop their literacy skills.

Chapter 5: Becoming Anti-Colonial Literacy Educators: An Online Collaboration across Texas and Puerto Rico

Centering de/anti-colonial theories and methods,
this article describes how two teacher educators,
in Texas and Puerto Rico,
collaborated to prepare Latinx preservice teachers.

It's 11:30am Central Time in the early spring of 2020 and at university in Texas a class of 23 bilingual preservice teachers begin to settle as they hear that now familiar ring alerting them that their Puerto Rican peers have joined the Zoom call. I run around making sure that the microphones are working, the cameras are in the correct setting, and the Puerto Rican preservice teachers are displayed across all four monitors, trying to get us as "close" as we can be. We are now ready to begin our conversation.

These were the sights and sounds in my Bilingual Reading Methods class in Texas during every one of the four weeks we collaborated over synchronous whole group and small group Zoom meetings with a group of preservice teachers in Puerto Rico. This collaboration, born from the commitment to critical anti-colonial literacies shared by Dr. Rocío Costa and I - two Puerto Rican teacher educators across Texas and Puerto Rico - supported mostly Latinx preservice teachers in becoming anti-colonial literacy educators.

The task of preparing bilingual teachers in ways that not only center the experiences of their children, but also allow for social critique and for connections to our colonial realities, is critical in all contexts. In our specific contexts of Texas and Puerto Rico, the present socio-political and historical moment calls for a continued response from teachers to the lived realities of the children in their classrooms. In the context of our Mexican American communities in Texas, the last few years have been anything but harmonious. The 2016 election of Donald

Trump and the antimigration policies implemented by his administration have left this community living in fear and pain. The local 2017-2019 raids by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (Statesman, 2017, 2018) traumatized this community, separated families, and left children in limbo as supermarkets, schools, and places of employment were viciously targeted by ICE officials. At the border, the discourse around the building of a wall along the Rio Grande Valley (Rodgers & Bailey, 2019) serves as a continued reminder of the US government's attack on the Mexican American community in Texas. Equally important, these events have been met with groups organizing in protest and resistance by local communities (Aguilar, 2017) and in alliances with other immigrant communities, including Muslims during the No Ban, No Wall 2017 rally.

In Puerto Rico, though the socio economic and political debacles have been in the making for centuries due to the colonial structures ruling our political and economic systems (Bonilla & Lebrón, 2019), a sense of urgency has come to life over the last two to three years. Undoubtedly, Hurricanes Irma and María were visible humanitarian crises that brought attention to the poor local and federal responses that led to the death of 2,975 Puerto Ricans. However, the financial crises resulting in an unpayable debt of 72 billion dollars, the highest unemployment rates in the US, and the forced establishment of the Fiscal Control Board (under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act passed by Congress) were all brewing right before this natural disaster added to the crisis. More recently, a series of earthquakes (Rice, 2020) struck the south of the island leaving over 2,000 people in temporary shelters and many more sleeping in tents out of fear. These natural and humanitarian disasters have been met with resiliency, agency, and activism from Puerto Rican communities and allies from grassroot movements, community kitchens, artistic movements, advancements in renewable energy sources for the island (Bonilla &

Lebrón, 2019) and a series of massive protests in *el verado del 2019* that lead to the resignation of former governor Ricardo Rosello (Mazzei & Robles, 2019).

These socio-political, historical and economic events cannot be ignored in K-12 classrooms as they are an integral part of our children's daily and collective lives, fears, and experiences. Consequently, teacher preparation programs have an immense responsibility in preparing teachers for the insumensurable task of a critical, liberating educational experience for these communities who have been historically oppressed. For our Latinx teachers, in both the Texas and Puerto Rico contexts, this process is complicated by their own teachers' identities and experiences in these oppressive contexts and their educational experiences often lacking these critical practices (Flores, 2017). While it is crucial to take the current socio-political context impacting schooling and education into account, I argue we can go a step further and support elementary age students in making connections between today's unjust social systems and our colonial and imperial histories and realities. This study explores how a transnational collaboration, across teacher preparation programs in Texas and Puerto Rico, supports preservice teachers' understandings and applications of de/anti-colonial theories and methods.

Theoretical Framework

Grounded in decolonial theory (Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007), Zavala (2016) suggests a series of methods that can be applied in different educational contexts, formal and informal. He uses the term educational contexts in a very specific way referring to education as "a site of struggle and rupture" (p. 1) where people come together in dialogue to discuss and respond to colonialism. This research project opened this space of dialogue across the Texas and Puerto Rico contexts and asked preservice teachers to reflect on socio-historical and contemporary contexts

while applying these methods and strategies in their literacy planning. Before diving into the education strategies proposed, Zavala (2016) summarizes for us what he considers the three main strategies of the decolonial project within his framework. First, he argues that the decolonial project tries to undo our understanding of European and US modernity and with it the idea that its inventions are superior to those of the native peoples. This challenges the idea of colonialism of others as a natural and obvious process, and allows us to challenge our cemented views on education, and the teaching of literacy specifically, as already pre-established. Second, it creates space for a particular border thinking, or what he calls working from the margins, allowing me to operate from both the academic/scholarly colonized space as a researcher and from my place as a member of my geographically marginalized community. This working from "the cracks" also allows preservice teachers to envision themselves as decolonizing critical literacy educators while working within oppressive and colonizing state, district and school systems. Third, the decolonial project opens a door to engage in educational practices that reclaims and develops knowledges and knowledge systems that have been historically repressed and erased. This project invites us to both recover these past knowledges and generate new ways of knowing that are relevant to our contexts, and the contexts of our elementary school children today.

Zavala's (2016) work offers three methodologies or strategies: *counter/storytelling, healing* and *reclaiming.* He explains that these are not linear ideas but rather interlock as he shows in the diagram provided here:

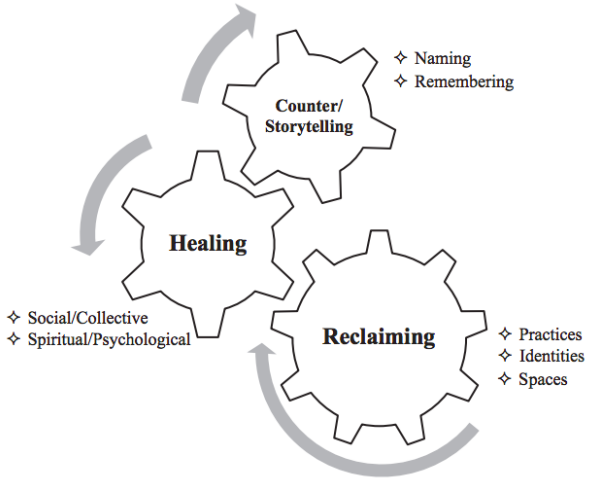

Figure 3: Decolonial Methodologies/Strategies in Education (Zavala, 2016, p. 3)

Counter/Storytelling. Counter/Storytelling emerges from the critical literacy (Freire, 1970) tradition of dialogue and reflection. Scholars in the field of Critical Race Theory and Latinx Critical Theory have taken on and extended on the practice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). It centers on providing people with a language of critique that goes beyond naming and critiquing oppressive social structures that are inequitable to members of society based on their class, race, gender, abilities, etc. Instead it focuses on people naming their social worlds as encircled by colonialism and its structural arrangements and on developing a language of critique for this state. This practice of naming requires collective dialogue and reflection of people's past and contemporary experiences. Naming is deeply connected to the practice of remembering. This includes understanding the present in relation to colonialism, remembering and restoring who we are as indigenous people and engaging in this process of remembrance as a collective process within our families and communities. One example of this in the classroom might be the retelling of Texas history around the Alamo from the Black and indigenous perspectives and framed within the US and Texas imperial conquest of Mexican lands.

Healing. The process of colonization takes away who we are in relation to ourselves, each other, our communities, land and our knowledges. Healing is central in the process of recovering from this brutal process and healing from collective trauma. It can take place individually or in community through dialogue and action. Unlike naming and remembering which can be considered cognitive or intellectual processes according to Zavala (2016), healing is often seen as having no space in educational projects. Consequently, the very concept of healing through education challenges Western conceptions of education and research in educational spaces. Noteworthy to my work, healing is also omitted from Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy theories and practices, thus my project opens up spaces for preservice teachers and young children to engage in healing, if they decide to, by engaging in literacy practices. It is important to note that the practice of engaging in healing in the literacy classroom might generate pushback by some if framed as a religious practice; this point might be of some concern for preservice teachers. One concrete example of this in the literacy classrooms might be the creation of dialogues, texts and written projects that center healing from the current brutal immigration situation in the US/Mexico border (Ramsey, 2020) or the recent natural disasters events in Puerto Rico that have been exacerbated by US neglect (Lin, 2020).

Reclaiming. The concept of reclaiming is closely related to praxis in Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970) or taking transformative action within Critical Literacy (Vazquez, Hanks, & Comber, 2019). It is the process of reclaiming who we are as peoples, our identities, histories, practices and our relationship to land and place. This includes ancestral, Indigenous knowledges, but also local knowledges and ways of doing teaching and learning. One example of this are the battles for Ethnic studies across the Southwest or efforts to include land-based education in the

curriculum (García, Ruiz Bybee & Urrieta, 2016). Reclaiming takes back our close relationship to nature and challenges the idea that economic progress comes before protecting natural resources. This can take a variety of shapes in the literacy curriculum dependent on context and student interest, but some examples include a focus on climate change as it impacts our local communities or a project focused on the dumping of coal ashes in the west of Puerto Rico in recent years.

Counter/Storytelling, healing and reclaiming are all interrelated processes and cannot operate without each other. While an elementary classroom in Puerto Rico might be working on healing through dialogues and literacy practices after the 2017 Hurricane María, it is critical that students and teachers question the government's poor response to the emergency and draw connections to the US/PR colonial status, for example.

Review of the Literature

Preparing Teachers for Anti-Colonial Methods

Preparing teachers to engage with and plan literacy lessons that include elements of de/anti-colonial theories and methods is uncharted territory. We know from the literature that scholars have taken up preparing teachers for cultural diversity (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 2000; Simon, 2015) and the inclusion of racial literacies (e.g. Skerrett, Pruitt, & Warrington, 2015; Souto-Manning & Price Dennis, 2012), for example. In the sub field of critical literacy teacher preparation, we have learned that, the mostly White preservice teachers think the implementation of critical literacy can be beneficial, but they are concerned with addressing "touchy subjects" (p.62), "offending anyone by overstepping their boundaries" (p.62) or challenging district

curricula (Norris, Lucas & Prudhoe, 2012), and often let critical conversations whine down in order to "keep peace" in the classroom (Saunders, 2012, p.21).

More specifically, some Canadian colleagues have begun studying how to include anti-colonial elements in teacher education programs (Dion, 2007; Haig-Brown, 2009; Kerr, 2014). Kerr (2014) shares how her teacher candidates perceived these perspectives as "difficult knowledges" or refusals to know and engage, (p.94) and exhibited anger at a guest scholar's use of the word spirituality when talking about public education. In Dion's (2007) study, white preservice teachers positioned themselves at first as benevolent strangers, claiming knowing nothing about and having nothing to do with Aboriginal people, as they aim to protect themselves from the fear of having to recognize their own roles. In contrast, a Black teacher candidate of Jamaican origin in Haig-Brown (2009) connected her traumatic experiences with racism to the colonial history in Canada and began to see herself in relation not only to White people in her city, but to indigenous peoples and their land as well. She understood her own history as twice displaced (from Africa and then Jamaica) in relation to colonialism-- this deeper understanding of history helped her begin her healing process.

This study looks specifically at how we prepare mostly Latinx literacy preservice teachers to engage with and design literacy activities that center de/anti-colonial theories and practices. Due to the collaborative nature of this project, I now review literature related to collaborations across teacher preparation programs.

Collaborations across Teacher Preparation Programs

In the field of teaching and teacher education collaboration is not rare, yet some types of professional collaboration are more common than others. Collaborations across teacher education programs and schools are common and have been occurring since the late 1890's (Bookhart & Loadman, 2011). These aim to bring school stakeholders and teacher educators and educational researchers together as equal partners to better educational experiences for children. Other types of collaboration include the exchange of content knowledge across distinct teacher preparation programs areas in order to supplement the learning experiences of preservice teachers such as in the case of language learning and special education (Stein, 2011). Collaborations between education programs across higher education institutions are not as widespread (Duffield, Olson &Kerzman, 2012). Duffield and colleagues (2012) argue that teacher preparation programs often compete with one another for enrollment and operate under distinct missions as individual entities, making collaboration uncommon. In their work describing the partnership between three teacher education programs, they found how collaboration was beneficial for the recruitment, preparation and induction support of high quality teachers. Their work however, captured macro challenges and benefits from institutional collaborations. In this article, we zoom in to pay closer attention to preservice teacher development across the Texas and Puerto Rico contexts.

In a similar effort Fránquz & Pratt (2011) collaborated across central Texas and Puerto Rico. In the summers of 2008 and 2009, the researchers conducted a collaboration through the professional development of in-service writing teachers as part of a master's program in TX and a writing program in PR. They used a Chicana femenist framework (Anzaldúa, 1987) and third space theory (Gutiérrez, 2008) to describe how teachers came together through the use of video

conferencing to learn about literacy events and practices across contexts. The authors found that teachers shared similar challenges in their teaching practices such as overcoming their fears of writing and handling standardized measures both on the island and in the mainland. Additionally, teachers were also able to empathize with issues in one context and reflect on how that impacted their own schools, as in the example of one teacher who questioned how both contexts prepared children as speakers of academic English for higher education in her written reflection. Another teacher reflected on how technology enabled the breaking of barriers and the coming together under one same goal across contexts, and a different educator implemented the use of Skype with her own students later on. Although my work made use of similar technology across similar contexts, it pushes on the boundaries of how we look at the teaching of literacy in bilingual classrooms, using a de/anti-colonial frame and will push the reflection of preservice teachers in their own identities across colonized contexts.

Methodology

The purpose of this Snap-Shot Case Study (Thomas, 2016) was to illustrate how mostly Latinx, bilingual preservice teachers who were getting ready to teach literacy took up anti-colonial theories and methods as part of a collaboration across two teacher education programs. This article is part of a larger semester long case study bounded by the collaborative project across Texas and Puerto Rico.

Context

This project was born out of the Global Classroom initiative sponsored by the Texan university. In this program faculty members from across the globe collaborate and co-teach through the use of technology in order to enrich university student's learning experiences. This

initiative, as well as our shared interest and commitment to the preparation of preservice teachers for de/anti-colonial critical literacy practices, brought Dr. Costa and I together in this project. As part of the collaboration the preservice teachers engaged in whole group, small group, and individual assignments, all with the objective of developing as critical and anti-colonial educators.

The Preservice Teachers

We invited two cohorts of preservice teachers to participate in this study. Twenty-four of them are part of the Bilingual Teacher Preparation program at the Texas university. They were all enrolled in the Bilingual Reading Methods course taught by myself. Nineteen out of the twenty four preservice teachers identify as Mexican or Mexican-American; one student self identified as Colombian; and four as white. Nineteen were female and four were males. All participants consider themselves to be bilingual. The second cohort consisted of thirteen students in the Elementary and Early Education program at the Puerto Rican institution and were enrolled in Dr. Costa's *Enseñanza de la lectoescritura en los grados 4to a 6to* or the Teaching of Literacy in Grades 4th to 6th. They all identify as Puerto Rican females and are all bilingual.

The Teacher Educators

I, Nathaly, am both the instructor for the Bilingual Reading Methods course in the Texas institution and the researcher in this study. As a Puerto Rican woman and teacher educator in Texas, I am interested in how we prepare Latinx literacy educators to teach in ways that center children's lived experiences and that allow them to engage in social critique of the inequalities they might experience. Dr. Rocío Costa is the collaborating teacher educator and current professor for the Upper Elementary Literacy Development course at Puerto Rican institution. She has been

preparing teachers for almost 20 years and is committed to create social change and to transform society into a more just one.

The Synchronous Collaborative Sessions

The preservice teachers participated in four synchronous collaborative Zoom sessions across the early 2020 Spring semester. At the beginning of each session the teacher educators would guide the preservice teachers into a conversation centered around one or more discussion questions and related texts (see *Table 4* below). This article is a snapshot of the third collaborative session focused on de/anti-colonial theories and methods. I will now outline the methodology for the entire collaboration, and will then move to the analysis of the third session.

Topic	Readings	Whole Group Discussion Question(s)	Date
The Teaching of Literacy as a Political Act	Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1987). La importancia del acto de leer. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.	*¿Cómo relacionas las lecturas con tu historia, tu contexto y tu práctica como maestrx?*	01/28
Critical Literacy	Vasquez, V. M., Janks, H., & Comber, B. (2019). Critical Literacy as a Way of Being and Doing. *Language Arts, 96*(5), 300-311.	*¿Cómo impactó esta lectura tú visión sobre la enseñanza de la literacidad? ¿Que ideas centrales te llamaron la atención o atrayeron?* *¿Qué conexiones puedes hacer entre la lectura y tu contexto histórico, político y social?*	02/04
De/Anti-colonial Methodologies in Education	Zavala, M. (2016). Decolonial methodologies in education. *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory.*	*¿Cual es tu visión sobre la educación decolonial?* *¿Si hubieses sido expuestx a estos principios o conocimiento durante tu educación escolar, cómo te hubiese impactado?* *¿Es pertinente a tu contexto?*	02/11
Practical Applications	None.	Whole group lecture by teacher educators reviewing all theories and modeling the development of literacy instructional activities.	03/10

Table 4: Topics of Synchronous Classroom Whole Group Discussions

After the initial 30-40 minutes of whole group discussion, students would transition into what we called “virtual learning groups.” These seven groups, named after colors, were composed by five to six preservice teachers from both contexts. The preservice teachers utilized technology such as Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Facetime and phone calls to connect and work together on the assigned task for approximately thirty minutes of each collaborative class session.

Figure 4: Preservice Teachers in Texas Collaborate over Facetime with their Peers in Puerto Rico

For each session, Dr. Costa and I had planned an activity using Google Doc or Google Draw where all preservice teachers could log in, using a link provided in advance. Each group received a unique link. In the table below, we include the instructions provided to preservice teachers to guide their small group work.

Topic	Small Group Instructions	Date
The Teaching of Literacy as a Political Act	¿Cómo relacionas las lecturas con tu historia,tu contexto y tu práctica como maestrx? En este diagrama de Venn, compara y contrasta como se relacionado a lo aprendido de las lecturas por los candidatos a maestrxs de ambos contextos.	01/28
Critical Literacy	Pensando en los salones de clases que has visitado en tu contexto (Texas y Puerto Rico), aplica los principios discutidos en la lectura en tu planificación de un mini plan de lección de literacidad crítica de manera grupal. **Inicio:** ¿Cómo comenzaría la unidad, cómo centrarías las voces de los estudiantes? **¿Cómo escogerías el tema?** **Conexión a lo aprendido:** ¿De los "Key Aspects" que comparten las autoras del artículo (p.306-307), qué principios están incluyendo o aplicando en tu planificación? **Desarollo:** ¿Qué tipo de textos escogerían? **Final:** ¿Cómo evaluarían la lección?	02/04
De/Anti-colonial Methodologies in Education	**Escoge:** ¿Cuáles de esas categorías descritas en el artículo de Zavala (*Counter Storytelling/Healing/Reclaiming*) tu utilizarias en el salón de lectura? Crea una red de ideas en colaboración con tu grupo (en línea) de que actividades imaginas que puedes hacer en el salón de clases con tus estudiantes como parte de tu clase de lectura.	02/11
Practical Applications	Basado en el tema provisto crea una red de ideas en colaboración con tu grupo (en línea) de que actividades instruccionales imaginas que puedes hacer en el salón de lectura. **Temas:** (identidad de género, justicia ambiental, el miedo, control de armas, gentrificación, racismo)	03/10

Table 5: Topics of Collaborative Small Group Discussions

Lastly, students were invited to create an artifact as part of their small group collaborative work.

Next (Figure 5) is one example created by the Purple Group.

Figure 5: Class Artifact Conceptualized by Purple Group during our 3rd Collaborative Session

We now turn to the findings, where I have analyzed data from the third week of collaborations in order to provide a focused snapshot of the experience.

Importance of the Collaboration on PreService Teachers' Understandings and Applications of Anti-colonial Theories and Methods

My analysis across the larger set of data encompassing four synchronous Zoom conversations and fifteen small group recordings led me to understand the importance of this collaboration in preservice teacher learning. I found instances where the teacher educators extended learning in their home contexts, across contexts after beginning to teach solely in their home context, and across transnational contexts directly. I also found how the conversations between preservice teachers also deepened their understandings of the theories and methods, whether that was within the whole group conversation or, most commonly, during the small group interactions.

In this article I use a Snapshot Case Study methodology (Thomas, 2016). I focus solely on the transcriptions of the conversations amongst the Texas and Puerto Rico preservice teachers during the third week of collaboration (02/11/20) centered on de/anti-colonial methods to provide a more focused representation of these findings across consecutive segments of conversation. The snapshot, analyzed through a de/anti-colonial theoretical frame, captured a three hour long literacy methods class where preservice teachers collaborate through a Zoom synchronous whole group discussion, in small group discussions, and during the creation of a class artifact. The sources of data included (1) the transcript of the forty minute whole group class discussion and (2) the transcript of five small group conversations. This snapshot methodology allowed me to capture an important slice of this project in unique depth, with the hopes of guiding teacher

educators and other practitioners who might be interested in taking up a similar project in their unique socio-cultural, political and geographical contexts.

Teacher Educators Deepen Understandings at Home and Across Transnational Lines

In our Home Classroom. As in any classroom, whether that is the preschool space or a senior class in college, teachers naturally intend to extend their students' thinking, push them to reflect, help them see a concept in a new light, or to consider alternative solutions to a problem. While we were connected through Zoom for our whole class collaboration, there were still many moments where Dr. Costa and I taught just to our own classes in our specific contexts because something needed to be clarified, because we needed to tend to something content specific, or because we needed a moment from the technology.

In this first example, at the beginning of the whole class discussion on de/anti-colonial methods (02/11/20), the Puerto Rico class jumped into a discussion led by Dr. Costa who senses the need to describe her definition of decolonial theory, and more specifically what this term means in the Puerto Rico context.

> [Both classes are working independently]
> **Dr. Costa:** Las teorías decoloniales...hacen una crítica...lo que se ve es que...es colonizado por el colonizador, y el conocimiento que tenía el colonizado no es un conocimiento que es válido ahora…
> **Nathaly:** Mira Rocío, ¿quieres enseñar pa ca también? Hahaha...que expliques pa ca´también….
> [Dr. Costa continues her lecture]
> **Dr. Costa:** Eso es lo que pasa en las colonias, las colonias lo que ocurre, lo que importa es lo que plantea el colonizador. *En nuestro caso* [added emphasis] todo lo que sea Norteamericano, es lo que vale...todo lo que sea Europeo, cuando pensamos de música...no hablamos de...rápidamente pensamos en los Europeos, cuando hablamos de literatura, rápidamente pensamos en los Europeos o Norteamericanos…no es que Puerto Rico sea lo mejor…
> **Nathaly:** ¿Qué palabras hubo acá?

Here we see how Dr. Costa makes a pedagogical choice to begin class solely addressing the students in her context, providing a critical definition of decolonial theories. She goes deeper by providing examples that are specific to the Puerto Rico context saying "in our case, everything that is North American is what has value, everything that is European…" (02/11/20, Zoom Transcript, translated). Although Nathaly attempts to get her attention asking, "do you want to teach facing this way as well?," Dr. Costa continues her explanation, shifting Nathaly to start a local discussion about the words the preservice teachers came up with during the opening exercise: "Write in your Whatsapp group a 'good morning' and 'what do the words colonial and decolonial mean to you'" (PowerPoint Class 02/11/20, translated).

From the Home Classroom to Across Transnational Lines. At other times, the richness of what one teacher educator was discussing in the local context inevitably percolated to the transnational context. A few minutes later in the same conversation above, once Dr. Costa has met her goal of defining decolonial theory in her context, and she then goes to extend learning in the Texan classroom.

> **Dr. Costa**: ¿Me hablas a mí?
> **Nathaly**: No, sí que sigas [*laughs*] estamos tratando de escuchar...
> **Dr. Costa**: Que...que una de las preguntas que uno se puede hacer, es ¿cuál es el conocimiento ancestral verdad, que quedó oprimido y que nosotros necesitamos recuperar? Esa es la pregunta. Cual es el conocimiento que tenían nuestros abuelos o nuestro bisabuelos que nosotros queremos recuperar, que ha sido y que es y que es nuestro. Que no fue impuesto, si no que es nuestro...es la que hace el colonizado, el colonizador, perdón, es que tiene que ver con la modernidad verdad, tiene que ver con la modernidad es que no es por la naturaleza [inaudible audio] nosotros usamos la naturaleza como un recurso, pero si no respetamos lo que esta naturaleza nos da pues nosotros tenemos que modificar ciertas formas de nuestra vida para que podamos ser parte de ella. Y en ese sentido se conecta con la idea de sanar también, con lo espiritual, cuando tu tienes conexión con la naturaleza hay una noción espiritual…

Here Nathaly continues to try to get Dr. Costa's attention, because she considers her explanation of decolonial theory and the concrete examples she offers very valuable and wants the Texas students' learning to be enriched by this experience. After telling her "yes, continue, we are trying to listen over here…" (translated), Dr. Costa explains how we need to ask ourselves, "what is our ancestral knowledge, what was oppressed that we need to recover…?" (translated) and goes on to explain the concept of modernity versus our connection to nature as a part of our healing journey.

In another example, Nathaly is providing context to her Texan students about the Puerto Rican political parties after a question from a Puerto Rican student: "are the Independents (referring to a political party) decolonial?" (translated).

> **Nathaly**: Entienden eso acá, en Puerto Rico hay un movimiento estadista queremos ser parte de los Estados Unidos, nos queremos quedar como estamos ahora mismo o queremos ser un país independiente, así que ya estan posteando la pregunta sería lo que quieren los independientes sería un movimiento decolonial porque nos separaríamos de los Estados Unidos y seríamos nuestro propio país.

Because the Puerto Rican student's question was on the table, Nathaly felt she needed to provide context to the Texas students so they could understand what she was asking. This teaching moment reminded all of us, including Nathaly, that a country can be independent and still continue to hold "colonial ideologies, like it happens in the rest of Latin America…" (translated).

> **Dr. Costa**: Pero uno puede tener una independencia colonial todavía con una ideología colonial, como se da en el resto de latinoamérica, que son países independientes pero asumen que lo que viene del norte, lo que viene de europa y de estados unidos es lo mejor. [inaudible audio] Entonces una independencia no te garantiza a ti una prácticas decoloniales.

In this moment of transnational teaching, Dr. Costa posits that in Latin American countries that are independent today, they continue to hold colonial ideologies, valuing ideas from the Global North above local practices. She ends with a powerful statement, "independence does not

guarantee decolonial practices" (translated), a simple but powerful truth that Nathaly also needed to be reminded of and that propels her to clarify this idea in her local Texas context:

> **Nathaly**: Entienden eso, que aunque sea políticamente diferente la ideología se queda aquí, de que es el conocimiento que vale de cuales son las prácticas que valen y de que es lo que vale que enseñemos en el salón de clase... ¿Sí?

This clarification is influential, because it leads a student in Texas to a crucial question, "who is my colonizer?" (translated). After being offered a window into understanding the Puerto Rican context where US imperialism appears to be more concrete, this preservice teacher takes a look inwards to her context to ask:

> **TX Student:** Una pregunta que yo personalmente tendría sería quién sería nuestro like [inaudible audio] colonizador, sería como los anglos [inaudible audio] o sería como las influencias europeas.

Here the collaboration in itself and the exchange of ideas between professors in the turns of talk analyzed above, lead this Texas student to look into her own experience and unveil the more forgotten colonial stories of the Southwest of the United States.

Directly from One Context to the Other. The last type of teaching I share here includes moments when teacher educators deepen the understanding of preservice teachers directly across contexts. In this example, a few minutes have passed between the conversation analyzed above and Dr. Costa's lesson to a student in Texas. From her talk, it seems like she continued to think about the question by the Texas student, "who is my colonizer?" (translated), and comes back to address this point directly from one context to the other.

> **Dr. Costa:** Yo pensando en la pregunta de la estudiante tuya… no se vería eso en los Estados Unidos como la cultura blanca sobre la cultura [inaudible audio]...que si Estados Unidos además de la opresión de las culturas nativas, también afecta como el que la cultura blanca es hegemónica [inaudible audio] por encima y colonizando las otras culturas, la cultura Afro, la cultura Asiática, pensando en los otros inmigrantes.
> **Nathaly:** ¿Qué creen acá? [inaudible audio] ¿Sí o no, eso es parte de esa colonialidad?

> **Texas student:** Que especialmente cuando está este mito que este país, fue construido por inmigrantes más bien, como fue construido con el tiempo anglosajones...incluso en (university name) hemos hablado mucho de esto, que inclusivamente los nombres que antes eran en español porque Texas solía ser parte de México están...no se si están haciendo Spanish [inaudible audio] pero si quieren hacer los nombres más cortos para facilitar a su propio lenguaje. Y entonces indirectamente se está borrando el idioma español, entonces [inaudible audio] y San Jack en vez de San Jacinto… se ve muy sutil, pero si se está borrando un chorro de cultura.

Dr. Costa explains colonialism in the US as beyond the stealing of Native American land and includes the oppression of enslaved African Americans and immigrant groups. This could be easily criticized by scholars who explain that the term decolonization "is not a metaphor" (Tuck and Yang, 2012) and refers solely to the repatriation of land to Native communities. However, Dr. Costa uses the term here to refer to the hegemony of whiteness in the US and to the current oppression experienced by the broader BIPOC community in the US. This explanation leads the Texan student to remember that Texas used to be part of México and to identify the example of English speaking Texans in her local city changing (in speech) the name of streets originally named in Spanish. From Dr. Costa's teaching, this student takes up anti/de-colonial theories as they relate to her current experience today and not as something from the past, as is common by the Puerto Rican students and Dr. Costa, who most often refers to US imperialism that is currently happening and not to Spanish colonialism that happened in the past in their discussion.

PreService Teachers Teach Each Other

We now turn to instances when the preservice teachers deepen their understanding of de/anti-colonial theories by interacting directly with each other. At times, these clarifications or gentle nudges into deeper learning came from preservice teachers in the same context. At other times, these understandings were prompted by preservice teachers across transnational lines. For

this second category, I drew on small group recordings since there was more direct student-to-student interaction in this setting than during whole group Zoom conversations.

It is important to note that while I have organized the data in these categories for the purposes of analysis and readability, talk is a complex process, and a preservice teacher's (PTs) show of understanding at a certain moment in time is inextricably connected to something they heard several turns before in the conversation.

In the Same Context. Although these two cohorts of PTs were immersed in the collaboration across Texas and Puerto Rico, inevitably, there were moments where students engaged in conversation as if no one was watching and listening over Zoom. The example highlighted here is an extension from the conversation above, when the Texas student asked: "who is our colonizer?" In this example, PTs in the same context contend with a question undoubtedly tied to their unique context.

> **TX Student 1**: Una pregunta que yo personalmente tendría sería ¿quién sería nuestro like [inaudible audio] colonizador, sería como los anglos [inaudible audio] o sería como las influencias europeas?
> **TX Student 2** (Mauricio): Europeos [hesitant]
> **Nathaly:** ¿Los Europeos?
> **TX Student 3**: Mmm los anglosajones
> **TX Student 4**: Ellos fueron los primeros que entraron y luego desde ellos vinieron los Tejanos básicamente.
> **TX Student 2:** Pero éramos territorio de los españoles, no quién era…
> **TX Student 4:** Sí pero mmm [inaudible audio] hubo una mezcla

After Texas Student 1 poses her question to her peers in the local context, "who is our colonizer, would it be like the anglos, or like European influences?" (02/11/20, Zoom Transcript, translated), multiple students take a stab at trying to answer. One student answers "the Europeans" and another "mmm the anglos." From there, students arrive at the conclusion that anglos were the one "who entered first" and that from there the Tejano culture originated, along with a mix of

ethnicities and cultures. Although not much consensus is reached as to how to answer Texas Student 1's question, this conversation holds relevance because it has pushed a group of Texan preservice teachers, mostly of Mexican and Mexican American descent, to sit with a critical question and reflect on "who is my colonizer?"

The conversation is then shifted by Nathaly, the teacher educator in Texas, with the purpose of extending that learning moment. She starts by attempting to lead the class into acknowledging the Indigenous communities who were in what we now call the US Southwest prior to European occupation.

> **Nathaly:** Bueno, ¿quién ya estaba aquí antes de que vinieran los Europeos?...eran las comunidades indígenas...También esto era México en lo que estamos parados hoy, esa es otra… Igual que Puerto Rico que fuimos colonizados por los españoles y luego Estados Unidos llega en el 1898 y se queda con la isla, similarmente Estados Unidos compra por un precio muy muy barato a la mitad de México y se queda con toda esta tierra que le pertenecía a México (02/11/20, Zoom Transcript).

She then attempts to draw connections between both contexts, comparing the Spanish American War, where Puerto Rico is transferred over as booty of war from Spain to the US, to the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo, where half of México was taken over by the US in 1848. These connections could be an invitation for students to continue to look out the window to another context as they move through understanding their own histories and experiences in relation to colonialism.

Across Contexts. In the last section, I share two interactions where PTs build on their understandings of one another and their pedagogical practice in the light of de/anti-colonial theories and methods. As I mentioned before, I exclusively draw on data from the small group transcriptions for this section because the students' Facetime, Whatsapp, or phone call interactions allowed for more turns of talk when compared to whole group conversations over

Zoom. In this first example, I share an almost comical interaction, where Puerto Rican students are trying to understand what are the ancestral knowledges lost in the context of Texas.

> **TX:** ¿Tenemos que elegir un tema? ¿Específico?
> **TX:** Like maintaining tradition, no? Like [*inaudible audio*] storytelling…
> **PR:** ¿qué otra cosa?…
> **PR:** Countries…
> **PR:** Countries! Oye, una pregunta.
> **TX:** ¿Sí?.
> **PR:** Este...Este... Texas era territorio de México so lo... como los nativos…¿cómo lo digo?...
> **TX:** ¿Indígenas?
> **PR:** Lo tradicional de ustedes es bailar country?
> **TX:** No! [*laughter*]
> **TX:** ¿Es qué?
> **TX:** Bailar country.
> **TX:** No, no es, osea pues sí... Es...Osea no es tan... Yo creo que en otra perspectiva yo no sé…
> **TX:** I already know how to dance country.
> **TX:** Osea, los Tejanos con caballos y con gorros y todo eso porque así no es.
> **TX:** Hay una diversidad en Tejas, este sí hay mucha gente...osea gente que le gusta bailar country pero aquí no, bailamos like reggaeton...Norteñas...
> **TX:** Reggaeton... Osea hay comunidades... hay muchísimas comunidades y hay mucho hispano, muchos latinos.
> **TX:** Ah, osea…¿ustedes están diciendo que nosotros hemos perdido eso osea como los bailes eh cómo country? ¿Eso es lo que estás diciendo?
> **TX:** ¿Cómo folklórico?
> **PR:** Sí, como folklorico.
> **TX:** ¿Que eso lo hemos perdido nosotros?
> **PR:** Osea no [*inaudible audio*]
> **TX:** Oh, pues yo no me siento así. Yo no me siento así pero yo no se sí…
> **TX:** About what? We've lost what?
> **TX:** Like if you feel like you've lost the Texan (inaudible audio).
> **TX:** I don't understand.
> **TX:** Yo creo que, yo creo que no nos sentimos asi eh porque si somos latinos, hispanos... (Yellow Small Group Transcription, 2/11/20)

Here the Puerto Rican students are asking, "since Texas was Mexican territory" (translated), "what are the traditional practices that were lost?" As the Puerto Rican student is making sense of another context, she draws on her preconceived notions of what it is to be Texan asking "is

dancing country your traditional thing?" (translated). The Texan students then go on to explain that Texas is not about horses and hats, and that there is actually great diversity, even amongst Latinx communities. This student might be drawing on her knowledge of folkloric Puerto Rican culture as lost due to the hegemony of Americanization on the island, and might be searching for a parallel in the Texan context.

A few minutes later in the same conversation the Puerto Rican student comes around to apologize and verbalizes the value of this learning experience.

> **PR:** La profesora me estaba diciendo…[*inaudible audio]* se me olvido... nos enseñó una, nos enseñan algo sobre un país y creemos que es así pero cuando conocemos gente como ahora que estamos hablando con ustedes nos damos cuenta de que lo que pensamos en realidad no es. Lo siento.

"They teach us something about a country and we think it is like that, but when we meet people, like know that we are talking to you all, we realize that what we thought was not true. I am sorry" (translated). The Puerto Rico student here comes to the realization that she has drawn on stereotypical views of Texans and what she has been previously taught. She then values the interaction as a space where she is able to learn first hand about the experiences of others and ends with an apology.

Lastly, in some instances like this final example of data, the preservice teachers' exchange of knowledge was more focused on pedagogical decisions such as selecting content that aligned with standardized testing requirements (Yellow Small Group Transcription, 2/11/20) or the organization of the designed literacy experiences, such as diagrams versus writing activities (Purple Small Group Transcription, 2/11/20).

In this last example, the preservice teachers are deciphering which of Zavala's decolonial methods in education (*counter storytelling, healing* or *reclaiming*) to begin with for their small

group assignment. In this small group collaborative assignment (see Image 2), the PTs are asked to select the method and create a web of literacy ideas that would exemplify it.

> **PR:** ¿Cuál a ustedes le gusta? ¿Con cuál prefieren empezar?
> **TX Student 1:** Counter Storytelling
> **TX Student 2:** Ese es uno bueno para empezar...es difícil empezar con *healing* si no sabemos cuál es el dolor, cuál es la herida...y que hay que reclamar
> **TX Student 2:** Creo que es un buen orden, de hecho. 1, 2, 3. Bueno, pero así es como lo veo. Pero creo que aquí a veces solo hay tiempo de hablar de uno…
> **PR:** Empezar con eso antes [*inaudible audio*] de sanar.
> **TX Student 2:** Sí.
> **TX Student 1:** Ok, actividades que hariamos con *counter stories*.
> **TX Student 1:** ¿Qué actividades haríamos?
> **TX Student 3:** Hmm…Dijo que…
> **TX Student 3:** Como dijo allá, como ha dicho, dale el perspectivo del like the other side. (Pink Small Group Transcription, 2/11/20).

Here the PTs are making a collective decision about where to begin. A PT in Texas proposes *counterstorytelling* as a place to begin and is supported by her peer who rationalizes "it is hard to begin with *healing* if we don't know what the suffering is, and what we need to *reclaim*" (translated). Although this is a short exchange of ideas with the practical purpose of beginning the exercise, I found it worthy to share what the process of taking complex de/anti-colonial theories and translating them into a literacy instructional activity could look like in practice. The Texas PT is attempting to use logic to give an order to complex processes that are not linear, but rather interlock with each other (refer to the diagram on p. X). However, as students finishing an assignment, "there is only time to talk about one" (translated), and as future educators fitting complex ideas into the practicality of the classroom, the PTs here made a choice that made sense at the time, giving us insight into how other PTs might go about this process.

Conclusion

This project opened a window for teacher educators and practitioners to imagine how we can go beyond surviving the Zoom era. By providing preservice teachers with a rich collaborative experience over this technology, we were able to witness how their learning about de/anti-colonial theory was deepened and extended, not only by the teacher educators, but by witnessing a new context and building relationships with peers across the Atlantic ocean. By layering this collaboration with such ideological intent, that is to awaken the preservice teacher's understandings of these complex theories and inviting them to put them into practice, we were able to gain new understandings of what might bilingual, mostly Latinx preservice teachers think, say, and apply in their teaching practice. Throughout the data, we saw instances where preservice teachers from both contexts, as well as Dr. Costa, defined de/anti-colonial theories in relation to today's lived socio-political, economic, and racial struggles. This was in contrast to past events and in relation to Indigenous communities. This can be problematic, but also sheds lights on how preservice teachers take up this work and what they are willing to take into their instructional activities under many other systemic requirements and pressures. As we saw in the last data example, the preservice teachers searched for practical ways to take up these complex theories and rationalized why they decided not to include *healing*, for example, in their literacy instruction design. As teacher educators and practitioners, how do we strike a balance between diving deeply into critical and de/anti-colonial work, while also moving beyond the conversation? How do we invite our preservice teachers into the actual lesson design that is required for this pedagogy of healing, remembrance and restorying to make it to where it matters: our student's hands.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this dissertation project, I set out to understand the complexities of preparing Latinx preservice teachers for de/anti-colonial methods in their literacy classrooms. I especially wanted to see how transnational collaborations, using the Zoom software, allowed for this learning to take place. Along the way I became interested in the discourses the preservice teachers engaged in and what surfaced from these synchronous collaborations (see *Chapter 4),* as well as in the value of the collaboration in itself (see *Chapter 5).* In this brief conclusion, I summarize the lessons learned for researchers, teacher educators, and practitioners in the field. I discuss what I suggest are important areas of focus for researchers in this field. Finally, I conclude with reflections on the limitations of this project and share future directions of my work as a researcher.

Lessons Learned

As *Chapter 4* focused on the discourses that erupted over the synchronous Zoom conversations, I was able to grasp three important key lessons for researchers and teacher educators in my field. I learned that preservice teachers seemed to experience moments of awakenings, or deep understandings of critical theories and their application, whether that was due to a critical look at their past and present socio-political context, a class reading, a discussion, or the collaborative nature of the research project. Focusing on these discourses, I also learned that preservice teachers often engaged in restrictions to the work, as they quickly identified challenges, real or perceived, of engaging in de/anti-colonial work. Some of these restrictions were standardized testing and the age of children, for example. These restrictions were faced with what I called ruptures, or moments when another preservice teacher pushed through restriction by offering real solutions to the restriction. Along these lines, I learned that preservice teachers

gravitated back to the double narrative argument, or their justifications of why they must teach both the state imposed curriculum and the critical narratives we are inviting them into. Upon closer examination, I discovered that the preservice teachers were making this argument for two different reasons. First, this happened because they believed that they were neutral workers of the state summoned to present two narratives to children and allow the children to make decisions without teacher interference. Secondly, I found that preservice teachers were arguing for the double narrative as a subversive strategy, or a way to cover the more transformative, critical content with the required literacy curriculum.

In *Chapter 5*, I focused on the collaboration in itself with teacher educators and other practitioners in mind. My goal here is to offer a skeleton of a model that could be implemented across geographical and socio-political contexts. While critical and decolonial theories are highly contextualized and not meant to be generalized across contexts, I attempt to bring theory into practice by offering merely a model. In this piece, audience members will find extensive methods and context sections for added detail and clarity, compared to a traditional research article. The lessons learned during this specific examination are organized as a snapshot of just the third Zoom collaboration focused on de/anti-colonial methods in order to provide depth regarding one specific class session. Here I learned the power of collaborative teaching and learning. I was able to capture how the teacher educators from each context deepened the learning that preservice teachers were doing at home and across contexts, depending on student needs. I was also able to examine the role of the preservice teachers themselves in extending and deepening each other's learning, whether that was in their home setting or across contexts, during whole group conversations or in the intimacy of their small group collaborations.

Implications

Here I would like to briefly comment on some key elements that surfaced during this research project that could be helpful for teacher educators and researchers interested in extending this work. At the surface level, this project allowed us to see how the Zoom technology, so widely and commonly used now across university courses, could be implemented to extend the ways in which we do transformative teaching and learning in teacher education programs. By connecting preservice teachers from two distinct contexts with colonial histories and current day socio-political struggles and tensions, PTs had a valuable resource helping them understand these realities. Along these lines, layering the collaborative class design with the deep ideological intent by both Dr, Costa and I, to really expose these PTs to critical and de/anti-colonial theories, was crucial to the outcome of the project. It is important that researchers and teacher educators understand this crucial point, as the purpose of this research project was not the collaboration in itself, but the continued development of a critical consciousness in these preservice teachers.

Another key element to remember, is that PTs defined colonialism in their own terms, referring almost exclusively to their present day realities and struggles. In Puerto Rico, colonialism was defined in relation to US Imperialism with a focus on the English language and the erasure of local culture. In Texas, colonialism was defined in terms of whiteness and, similarly, of the English language holding dominance over Spanish. Although my intent as a researcher was to draw connections between our current day struggles and our colonial histories and structures, preservice teachers in each context will define this term through their own lens. This is particularly relevant when we ask them to include these ideological stances in their teaching, as the outcomes might not be what we expect.

Lastly, the teachers centered in this research project were Latinx, bilingual teachers of Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Colombian descent. They are the point of departure, not the typical white, monolingual preservice literacy teacher protagonist in most research in this field. The world views, experiences, and voices of PTs of Color must be increasingly present in literacy teacher preparation research if we wish to gain deeper understandings of how teachers of Color in particular take up and implement these critical and de/anti-colonial theories. The reasons why PTs of Color lean towards ideas of neutrality, for example, are in sharp contrast to the reasons why white PTs might do the same. This and other areas of focus need to be understood with PTs of Color at the forefront, instead of overgeneralizing findings of studies in the field with majority white participants.

Limitations

The biggest limitation to this study was the COVID-19 pandemic that began impacting both contexts the week of March 12, 2020. At a large scale, the pandemic interrupted the research study mid-way, making it impossible for the preservice teachers to enter the more practical phase of the study where they would have started designing lessons for elementary students. These lessons would have encompassed what the preservice teachers had learned and decided to implement from the three foundational class sessions on critical pedagogies, critical literacy, and de/anti-colonial theories. I was particularly interested in how this collaborative community would have supported the teachers in designing and implementing these lessons. Additionally, I was interested in learning what specific support from the teacher educators would have been most helpful or beneficial for the PTs as they translated these theories into actionable literacy lessons.

Another specific impact of the pandemic was the emotional and mental toll it took on the

participants, the researchers, and our relationships. With PTs undergoing acute stress, their investment in the collaborative project decreased, understandably so. Making contact with participants became challenging, and merely nine out of all participants accepted to participate in the one-on-one interviews. For myself as a doctoral candidate, COVID-19 added to the isolation already experienced by students in this stage of their programs. The analysis and writing processes became harder due to not only the pandemic stress but also the world events that continued to impact all of us throughout the 2020-2021 school year. While all these factors impacted the outcome of this study, I still believe that there were important lessons learned during the time spent in community with two cohorts of preservice teachers.

Future Directions

Within the areas analyzed here, discourses across collaborative sessions, and the collaboration in itself, much remains to be learned. Deeper Critical Discourse Analysis could potentially shed light on the growth of participants over time in their critical consciousness, the impact of the Texas and Puerto Rico contexts in PT learning, and the connections between PT conversation and larger sociopolitical systems. Regarding collaborations, analysis is yet to be done on the preservice teachers one-on-one interviews, as well as on exit tickets collected in both contexts where PTs were asked to quickly write how the collaboration had supported their understanding during each particular class session. These additional data sources will add valuable insights during future analysis.

If I were to continue working as a researcher in the field of critical teacher preparation, I would look at implementation next. I am interested in learning how Latinx PTs translate these theories into practical lessons that center the experiences of the child in critical ways, while also

covering foundational reading skills. While they engage in this work, what is the role of the teacher educator and what are the real and perceived barriers of putting these theories into practice? Finally, once preservice teachers enter the teaching profession, what are their successes in implementing these theories in real classrooms under organizational and societal pressures? Those are the areas of research I would focus on if I were to re-enter academic life.

As of now, I have started my role as Senior Manager of Academics with The New Teacher Project (TNTP). Here I work with school districts, teachers, and parents to support children, often Latinx and bilingual, in being successful in their literacy classrooms. A large part of my role is to shine a light on the ways (and languages) in which we do literacy in classrooms are problematic and do not honor the knowledges and practices of diverse children. In this position, I see a silver lining where I get to do work in the field with children, teachers, and families in real classrooms, while bringing my critical lens to re-shape the ways in which we do educational reform. I do not know where my career will take me, if academic research will once again become a focus, or if I will stay and grow at TNTP. To me, it does not matter. My purpose is the same as it was 12 years ago when I entered my first classroom: to hold a first grader's hand and make her feel safe, to meet all of her needs, to honor what she knows, and to inspire her to go for more, to help her unveil the inequities in her world, and to tell her she has a voice and agency and can make her world better for herself, her family, and community. Regardless of where I am, I am guided by this one light, the light I was lucky to have at times as a child, as a student, and during my time at UT Austin.

Appendix A

Preservice Teachers Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your understanding and views regarding decolonizing critical literacy education after taking your literacy methods course.

   Cuentame, después de tomar tu curso con la Dr. Costa, que crees o entiendes sobre los métodos de enseñanza de la literacidad que incluyen la pedagogía decolonial literacidades críticas

2. How do you understand your growth as a decolonizing, critical literacy educator during the Spring 2020 semester?

   Cómo creciste como maestra de literacidades descolonizadoras y críticas?

3. What do you think is important to include in your literacy curriculum moving forward?

   En el futuro, qué crees que es importante incluir en tu currículo de literacidad?

4. How did engaging in conversations through Zoom with preservice teachers in another contexts impact you?
   a. Your understanding of decolonizing critical literacies?
   b. Your planning of lessons?

   Cómo te impactó el participar de conversaciones a través de Zoom con maestros practicantes de otro contexto?

   a. *Tu entendimiento de literacidades descolonizadoras y críticas?*
   b. *Tu planificación de lecciones?*

5. Tell me about your work planning literacy lessons that centered decolonizing critical literacies.
   a. What were the outcomes?
   b. What challenges did you face?

   Cuéntame sobre el proceso de planificar tus lecciones que incluyeran teorías descolonizadoras o de literacidad crítica.
   a. *Cuál fue el resultado?*
   b. *Qué retos tuviste?*

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